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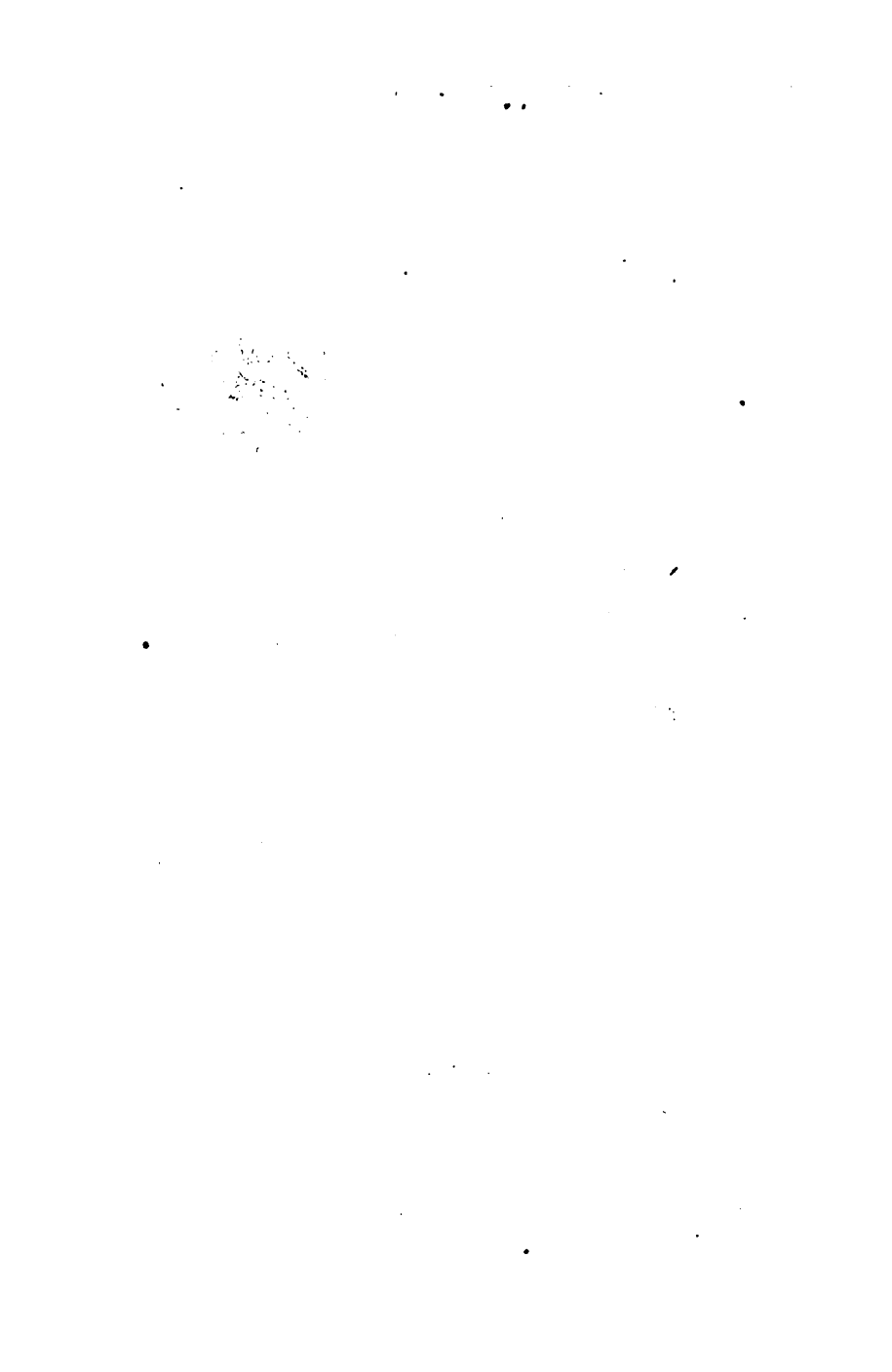




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THE  
KING'S PHYSICIAN,

And Other Tales.



BY

MRS. LEVETUS,

*(Late Miss Celia Moss),*

ONE OF THE AUTHORESSES OF THE "ROMANCE  
AND TALES FROM JEWISH HISTORY,"

"EARLY EFFORTS," &c., &c.

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1865.

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**To the Memory**

**OF THE LATE**

**Baroness H. M. de Rothschild,**

**A KIND AND SINCERE FRIEND**

**TO THE WRITER,**

**AND A**

**TRUE BENEFACTRESS TO HER PEOPLE;**

**TO WHOM THIS WORK,**

**WHEN ORIGINALLY PLANNED, WAS TO**

**HAVE BEEN**

**DEDICATED BY PERMISSION.**

**IT IS NOW INSCRIBED**

**AS A SLIGHT TRIBUTE OF RESPECT TO HER**

**MANY VIRTUES,**

**BY**

**THE AUTHORESS.**





## INTRODUCTION.

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IT is now nearly twenty years since the tales contained in this volume were planned, and partly written, with the intention of supplying a want that still exists—a book suitable for a gift to Jewish youth. It was considered by the writer that Jewish History, after the dispersion, was too little known or studied by the rising generation, and she wished, by selecting a few striking incidents and well-authenticated traditions, to awaken a desire to know more of records fuller of instances of fervent piety, courage, endurance and constancy under suffering, than those of any other people.

In conclusion, the writer has only to state that many of the tales have already been printed in the *Occident*, an American Jewish publication, which, however, is so little known in England as to render them new to the majority of English readers.

68, *Kent-street, Birmingham.*



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THE  
KING'S PHYSICIAN ;

A TALE OF THE  
SECRET JEWS OF SPAIN.

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AT the commencement of the sixteenth century, when a new and brighter era was beginning to dawn upon Europe, the misery and desolation of the remnant of Israel had become so great as scarcely to admit of increase. England had long since expelled them from her island-home. In 1492 Ferdinand and Isabella banished them from Spain ; and in 1493 Louis the Twelfth, whom his subjects styled the Father of his People, cruel and unjust to the Jews alone, had driven them from France ; while, in the parts of Italy and Germany where they were permitted to dwell, they were forced to wear a badge, and exposed con-

tinually, by the bigotry and rapacity of those amongst whom they dwelt, to robbery and massacre.

Excluded from every honorable employment, loaded with infamy, crushed under the weight of oppression, they gradually sank into a state of apathy and despair, hated by and hating those around them. Occasionally, however, men of genius would arise amongst them and shed a faint beam of light over their mental darkness. Sages and physicians, renowned even amongst the Gentiles, would prove that the intellectual faculty yet existed in Israel.

Amongst the most celebrated of these, at the time of which we speak, was Gabriel Henriques, physician to Francis the First, King of France. Born in Spain, while yet an infant at his mother's breast he had been exiled with his parents. His father, a man of great talent, was the chosen friend of Don Isaac Abarbanel, whom he followed into Sicily, where his skill in medicine enabled him to re-establish his shattered fortune.

Henriques and his wife, however, had suffered a greater deprivation than the loss of wealth ; their only daughter, a child but five years old, had been torn from them by a powerful noble whom Henriques had formerly offended. The laws of the land afforded to the bereaved parents no protection, and, almost heart-broken, they were forced to leave their darling child behind them, to be reared in the faith of their enemies. Both parents felt that they would have gladly seen her carried to the grave rather than

leave her thus, but they were forced to bear their loss unredressed, and mourn in silence over the lost lamb of their fold, impressing with earnest love on their remaining child the memory of his sister, teaching him to recall, by means of a little miniature carefully preserved, every feature of her face, so that, if they should ever meet, they should not meet as strangers.

As the child grew older, and was able to understand the beauty of his religious belief, both parents besought him, with solemn adjurations to cling, in weal or woe, in danger or prosperity, to the faith of his fathers, and, if he should ever meet his lost sister, to spare no means to win her back to the religion of her childhood.

Year after year passed without tidings of Anna Henriques, and, on the death of Abarbanel, his tried and trusted friend, the father of Gabriel removed to Italy, where he employed himself in completing the education of his son, and preparing him for his own profession.

The melancholy of both his parents had early tinged the manners of Gabriel with a gravity unsuited to his years. Naturally of a fiery temperament, association with his mother had given to his manners almost a girlish softness. Possessed of a singularly beautiful person, and a voice of surpassing sweetness, Gabriel, under the gentleness of his exterior, concealed an intellect of the highest order, which had been sedulously and fully cultivated by the care of his father, himself a man of great talent.



When Gabriel reached his nineteenth year, his father died, and in a few weeks his mother followed him to the grave, leaving the young man alone in the world, with the exception of that unknown sister after whom his heart secretly yearned.

On the death of his parents, Gabriel Henriques repaired to Milan, and continued his studies under the most celebrated Jewish physicians, until he became renowned throughout Italy for the wondrous cures he wrought. The report of his skill at length reached the ears of Francis the First, King of France, who appointed him his first physician, and took him to France in his suite.

There, in the court of one of the gayest monarchs of Christendom, Gabriel Henriques found himself in utter solitude. The only Jew openly permitted in France, he was cut off from all intercourse with his co-religionists, and the members of the King's household showed towards him only hatred and contempt. Thus, when not in attendance on the King, Gabriel's time was devoted to study; but how often in his loneliness did a yearning to love awaken in his heart. Alas! it woke in vain. Such was the situation of Henriques, when the King of France set out with a noble army for Italy.

## CHAPTER II.

THE battle of Pavia had been lost and won ; Francis the First was a prisoner in Spain, whither he had been removed by his own desire, with the intention of seeking an interview with the Emperor, in the hope of obtaining better terms from Charles than those offered through his Generals, which had driven the high-spirited Frenchman almost to madness ; but, instead of receiving his prisoner as Francis had hoped, with the chivalrous courtesy due to a fallen Monarch, Charles sent his captive to Madrid, under the charge of Don Ferdinand d'Alarcon, a Spanish noble of great austerity, while he himself, instead of granting the desired interview to Francis, set out on some pretence for Toledo.

Francis, heart-sick, and disappointed in the hope of seeing the Emperor, deprived of all amusement, and only suffered to take the air on a mule surrounded by guards, fell into a dangerous illness ; and Charles, fearing to lose by his death all the advantages he had gained by the battle of Pavia, set out for Madrid, and had a short interview with his prisoner, and subsequently granted permission that his sister and his favourite physician should be permitted to visit him. This was the state of affairs in the middle of the year 1525, at which period our tale opens.

### CHAPTER III.

GABRIEL returned to his own chamber, a room so confined in its dimensions, that it might more fitly have been termed a dungeon. Forced by the bigotry of the Spainards to perform the most menial offices for himself, and deprived of every comfort, the physician wasted not a thought on his own deprivations, but his heart ached at the melancholy condition of his royal master. He sat himself down on the only seat the room contained, and was soon lost in reverie.

"It is strange," he said, unconsciously thinking aloud, "how her sweet face haunts me in my sleeping and waking dreams. Oh, would that I had never gazed upon it, since for the Jew to love the heiress of a Spanish noble is more than madness. I must not think of her, save as a bright star too distant from me to admit of hope. Ah! would that I had never looked upon the beautiful Isabella, never set foot in this land, from which in my earliest infancy I was driven; and thou, too!" he continued, drawing from the folds of his garment a little miniature and gazing earnestly upon it. "I am here, Anna, my sister, in the same land with thee; and yet I am a stranger and alone. Where art thou, beloved one? yes, dearly beloved,

although unknown, in whose veins alone flows a drop of kindred blood !

“ Shall we ever meet again ? and if it be the will of the Almighty to bring us together, daughter of my beloved parents, how wilt thou receive me ? perhaps with scorn and contempt for thy brother the Jew ; and yet I must seek thee and strive to fulfil the wishes of my dead parents ;—but how and where ? ”

The meditations of the physician were interrupted by a light tap at the door ; he opened it, and to his great surprise beheld a Dominican monk, the confessor of Don Ferdinand d'Alarcon, standing at the entrance. The brow of the physician darkened as he bade him enter ; for since his arrival in Spain he had been more than once annoyed by attempts at conversion, originating in the zeal of Don Ferdinand, although hitherto the privacy of his chamber had not been invaded. Declining by a motion of his hand the seat Henriques proffered, the monk advanced to the table and gazed long and earnestly on the little miniature which the physician, on opening the door, had laid there. Astonished and annoyed, Gabriel in turn examined the features of his strange visitor with some attention.

In age the priest might have numbered some sixty years ; his figure had been commanding ; but age had slightly bowed it, and sorrow and time had imparted to his features a wrinkled and care-worn expression, although they still bore the remains of masculine beauty, while a beard, white as snow, descending to his waist, added to his venerable appearance.

Henriques, who, like most men of his time of life, depended much upon physiognomy, was rather pleased than otherwise with the appearance of Father Dominick, and he waited with some impatience to hear his errand. For several minutes the confessor continued to gaze with interest upon the features of the beautiful child the miniature represented ; at length he spoke abruptly :

“ Your name is Gabriel Henriques ? ”

“ It is,” answered the physician.

“ And your father was Jacob Henriques, formerly a physician of Castile ; your mother's name was Esther Lousada ? ”

“ It was,” answered Gabriel, wondering to what this question tended.

“ I thought so,” said the monk ; and he added, fixing his eyes on the face of his astonished auditor, “ you are very like your mother in features, and the tones of your voice also remind me of hers. Poor Esther ; ” he continued, “ thou at least art at rest ; thou and the husband of thy choice sleepest peacefully in that strange land to which ye were exiled, and your children, aliens to each other, both breathe the same air and dwell in the same city from which they were driven. Yes, those little ones who were nurtered at thy breast and cradled in thy loving arms are strangers, and perchance will ever remain so to each other.”

“ My sister ! ” said the physician, seizing Dominick's arm and gazing anxiously into his face ; “ thou knowest her—she lives—she is here in Madrid ? oh, if thou

canst lead me to her, let me look once on her face, and, despite thy garb, I will bless thee."

"Why?" answered the monk, "thou canst not love her; thou hast never seen her; for thou wert a babe at thy mother's breast when she and thy father courageously gave up all for their faith, and departed from Spain, never to return. Thy sister, as they have doubtless told thee, was taken from them to be reared in the Christian faith; therefore, she is doubly a stranger to thee."

"No," interrupted Gabriel impatiently, "for from infancy the name has been familiar; the hope of one day meeting her has been the dream of my life. My gentle mother constantly, through my childhood, recalled her to me; with the earliest prayer I lisped, her name was blended. My parents on their death-bed spoke of her, and since I have been alone in the world, night and morning have I looked upon that little miniature, showing forth in idea the child become a woman, and longing to clasp that woman in my arms and call her sister. Yes," he continued still more vehemently, "the one idea of my life has she been. Ah, never, had we grown up together beneath the same roof, mingling our childish thoughts and griefs, could I have loved her as I love her now."

As Gabriel ceased speaking, he became conscious that the eyes of the Dominican were fixed on him as if he would read his very soul. The mention of his parents and sister had rendered him for a time unconscious that he was speaking to a Christian and a

stranger ; but, recalled to himself by Dominick's gaze, he inquired, in an altered voice, the monk's business with him.

" I came from Don Ferdinand d'Alarcon," answered the monk ; " but the sight of that miniature recalled the past so strangely to my mind, that for a moment I forgot my mission."

" You are, I suppose, an apostate Jew, since you knew my parents ?" said Gabriel with contempt.

" I will answer that question hereafter," replied the monk, without any manifestation of anger, " meantime listen to the message of Don Ferdinand d'Alarcon." "' It is,' " says the pious knight, " ' a shame and scandal to all Christendom, and more especially to Spain, that the King of France should suffer a Jew to fill the office of his chief physician ; but as the Emperor has graciously consented that King Francis should be unrestricted in this point, though against the laws of Spain that any Jew should pollute her soil, he, the governor, desired that the error of your ways should be shown you, and he offered any preferment in his power to bestow as the price of your conformity to Christianity. Moreover, he has decreed that I, his confessor, shall visit you daily, so that you may profit by my instructions to save your soul from eternal perdition.' "

" I thank Don Ferdinand for his gracious care of my soul," answered the physician scornfully ; " for my personal safety, and freedom from molestation in my religious observances while I sojourn in Spain, I

have the word of two great kings. A Jew I was born," he added, "and a Jew I will die, spite of all the eloquence of all the priests in Spain."

"It is as I expected, Gabriel Henriques," answered the priest, "but this much I ask of thy courtesy, that thou wilt suffer me daily to visit thee here in thy chamber, and that thou also wilt visit me sometimes in mine, unless thou fearest thy faith is too weak to combat such arguments as I may offer."

"Be it so," answered the physician; "but as for my religion, it is too firmly fixed to be altered by thy reasoning; therefore do not flatter thyself with the prospect of my conversion."

"Time will prove," answered Father Dominick, "and now, for the present, farewell; to-morrow I wilt visit thee again."

"Stay," said the physician, striving vainly to repress signs of the emotion he felt at the name; "thou didst speak of my sister; tell me, I entreat thee, is she known unto thee? and if so, where does she dwell? Has she utterly forgotten the race from which she sprung?"

"Be content," said the monk, "for the present, to know that thy sister is rich, honoured and beloved; the widow of a powerful noble, her son is heir to one of the oldest titles and most extensive estates in Spain. At present she is esteemed a good Catholic, and her son, to whom I was preceptor, and to whom, as well as the mother, I am still confessor, is a noble and manly youth, whom to know is to love; but he is



withal unhappy, for he loves, and loves one whom the laws of the church to which he belongs will never permit him to wed."

"And my sister?" said Gabriel, in a faltering voice, "does she never think of her exiled parents, who died heart-broken in a foreign land? does she know that she has a brother, to whom her memory, although he knew her not, is dear as life itself?"

"Art thou mad," said the Dominican, "to believe that the haughty Catholic Countess would remember without a blush her Jewish origin? Didst thou present thyself before her and say unto her, 'Anna Henriques, I am the child of the same parents to whom thou owest thy birth,' perchance she would bid her menials drive thee from her gates, as an impostor or madman."

Crushed and heart-struck, as the probability of the Dominican's statement crossed his mind, Gabriel sat for a minute or two buried in the painful thoughts to which his words had awakened him, while the Dominican surveyed his sad but expressive features with a look of undisguised interest.

"There is a way," he said, advancing to the physician, and speaking in calm and measured accents, "by which thou mayest gain access to this sister who is so dear to thee. Do as she has done; renounce the errors of Judaism, and become of one faith as ye are of one blood."

"Begone, tempter," said the physician, aroused almost to madness; "know thou, who wouldst make

me a vile apostate like thyself by playing upon the best and holiest feelings of my nature, that, didst thou offer me the crown of Spain as the price of the apostacy from my faith, I would spurn it, as I spurn thee and thy offers."

Without replying, the monk approached the door, and, opening it, looked carefully round. He then, satisfied with his scrutiny, closed the door and advanced once more to the physician.

"Gabriel Henriques," he said, in a solemn voice, "thy words prove thee worthy of thy parents, and I will trust thee. Know then that, although thousands of Jews, at the cruel decree of Ferdinand and Isabella, quitted this lovely land never to return, others there were who, from various causes, preferred apostacy to exile; but, although these people outwardly conformed to the religion of their oppressors, they still clung in their heart of hearts to the religion of their ancestors, and practised in secret those laws they dared no longer openly profess; they joined themselves to the descendants of the forced converts of former ages, and despite the edict of Ferdinand and Isabella, despite the cruel vigilance of the Inquisition, in every part of Spain, under the cowl of the monk, in the court of the monarch, nay, even amongst the Judges of the Inquisition, concealed Jews are to be found.

"For myself," he continued with great emotion, "thy mother was my only sister, and I was married to a sister of your father's, so that in blood we are doubly akin. It was my intention, though holding a

high office under Ferdinand, to quit this accursed land with thy father and Abarbanel ; but two days before the time fixed for my departure my only child became dangerously ill ; to remove it was certain death ; and the mother, who passionately loved it, would not quit it. My wife was dearer to me than life, and, concealed by a benevolent Christian, we remained to await the child's recovery. After a time, fearing to bring too heavy a punishment on himself, our host refused longer to conceal us. My wife had fallen ill, and was near her confinement. To leave her and my dying child was impossible, and I became outwardly a Christian.

“ I wrote to your father, telling him what I had done, and he deigned no reply to my letters ; nor have I heard more of him until your bearing the same name, the likeness to your mother—peace to her soul—and that little miniature of your sister, revealed you to me. The step I had taken, and for which my conscience bitterly reproached me, availed me nothing. My wife died in giving birth to a still-born infant, a few days after the death of her eldest son, and I was left alone in the world with the exception of the little girl your sister, who had been torn from her mother, and to whose welfare I determined henceforth to devote myself, renouncing the world and all its allurements.

“ For safety, I took upon myself the monkish habit, and retired to a remote part of Spain, and obtained, by renouncing every personal indulgence, a reputation for superior sanctity. The monks,

while they praised my zeal, little dreamed that, to avoid violating the Jewish law, I made herbs my food and water my drink ; they knew not that the long nights in which I watched, were passed in prayers to God for pardon and pity on my soul, to atone for my guilt, and the guilt of my fellow-sufferers.

“ After passing a few years in the convent, I succeeded in obtaining the office of confessor to Count Garcia Nunez, the abductor of your sister ; and, while still keeping up the reputation of superior sanctity, I combined to impart to my sister's child some knowledge of her own people and her faith ; but the task was both difficult and dangerous ; for the proud Count had impressed the ductile mind of the child with such horror and detestation of the race from which she sprang, that the name of Jew was hateful to her.

“ Beatrice—for by that name she had been baptised—was fourteen years old at the time I was introduced into the Count's household ; but even at that early age her character was formed, and in mind and person she was a woman ; you,” continued the Dominican, “ bear impressed on your countenance all the beauty and sweetness of your mother ; but your sister, in features and character, strongly resembles your father ; although still beautiful, her beauty is of that order which awes rather than pleases ; and this is combined with a haughty self-reliance and energy rarely to be found in woman. Pride is the predominant fault of her mind, and to this all the better and nobler qualities

are sacrificed ; and you may look in vain to her for all those sweeter and gentler sympathies which form the charm of woman. Count Garcia had adopted her as his child, and destined for her all his immense personal wealth ; and, pleased to observe in her a kindred mind to his own, he almost worshipped her. A poor and distant relation of the Count's had been appointed *gouvernante* to Beatrice, but the energetic disposition of her charge rendered Donna Teresa a mere cypher ; and, at fourteen, your sister was absolute mistress of all around her.

“ It would take too long to tell how, by degrees, I won her to listen to me, and with what impatient scorn she at first treated my doctrines ; nor should I have succeeded, perhaps, at last, but that love combined with religion to work the change. The Count de Vidal, a descendant from a family of new Christians, wooed her successfully. The Count, though nominally a Christian, was secretly a Jew ; and with his aid Beatrice also returned to the faith of her people.

“ On the death of the Count, some years since, he confided to your sister and myself the guardianship of the young Count ; and Beatrice, though still young and lovely, has since refused every offer of marriage, and lives with her son, in whom all her love and pride are centred.”

The physician had listened with breathless attention to his uncle's narrative, and at its conclusion he submitted to the embrace the Dominican bestowed upon him, and, for the sake of his dead mother, returned it

with some warmth ; but the pure and noble mind of Gabriel revolted at a system of deceit practised through life, and he felt that, although, as his mother's brother, he might love Moses Lousada—for such was the real name of the Dominican—he could never honor or reverence a man whose whole existence was a cheat. Repressing his feelings, however, he asked of his uncle if it would not be possible to procure him a meeting with his sister. Moses promised to think of the means 'ere his next visit, and then withdrew, to report to his patron the result of the interview.

## CHAPTER IV.

FATHER DOMINICK found in the apartment of the governor, to which he repaired on quitting Gabriel's, Don Ferdinand, his wife and nephew, and Isabella de Marana, the young Spanish attendant of Marguerite. The eyes of the latter were red with weeping. The governor looked stern, his nephew sullen, and Donna Clara sat tranquilly at her tapestry work, apparently unmoved by the storm around her.

"Thou comest in good time, Father Dominick," said Don Ferdinand as the monk entered; "this stubborn girl refuses to obey the order of the Emperor, that she be prepared to wed my nephew on his arrival at Madrid, which is daily expected; and she wept but now with passion, because my nephew taxed her with unlawful love towards her cousin Leon de Vidal. But for his sake, as well as her own, she had best beware how she resists the commands of the Emperor."

"Father," said Isabella, in turn, addressing the confessor, while her eyes flashed with bitter scorn; "this most discourteous gentleman has dared to threaten me with the weight of his and my Sovereign's anger, because I am not willing the gold and broad lands my father left me, together with an unspotted name, should go to enrich the coffers of a profligate,

who has never proffered me the decent courtesies of society, far less the devoted attention a woman, let her rank be what it may, expects from the man who wishes to call her wife ; therefore let the Emperor, if he will, take from me the lands which the swords of my forefathers won ; let him, if he thinks fit, shut me up in a convent for life ; but death itself were preferable to becoming the wife of Don Luis."

"And death may come, proud maiden, sooner than thou thinkest," answered Don Luis, with suppressed passion. "Dost thou forget the high lineage of which thou boastest hath the taint of Jewish blood ? Dost thou forget that thy maternal grandsire did penance at an *auto-de-fe*, and was imprisoned for life as a heretic ? And Isabella," he continued, "dost thou remember the tribunal that tried him exists yet, and Beatrice de Vidal, despite her pride, was a Jewish child ? Beware how thou dost arouse too far the slumbering demon of my vengeance, lest it fall on thee and all who are dear to thee."

Isabella turned deadly pale at the unmanly violence of Don Luis, and Donna Clara, fearing that she was about to faint, threw down her work and sprang to her side, all her assumed calmness giving way at the sight of the girl's anguish.

"Isabella !" she said, "dearest Isabella, he but jests with thee ; Ferdinand," she continued, casting an imploring look at her husband, "urge her no farther now ; she is ill—see, she is dying," she almost shrieked,



as Isabella fell fainting in her arms. "Look, Don Luis, this is thy work!"

"Ay, women have always tears and faintings ready at will, when they can gain their ends in no other way," answered the young man savagely.

Father Dominick now thought it time to interpose. "Leave her to me, my son," he said, addressing Don Ferdinand; "I will reason with her and show her the sin and folly of resisting the lawful authority of her guardian and her Sovereign."

"Be it so," said Don Ferdinand; "thou, father, wilt doubtless succeed in convincing this refractory maid how foolish and vain is her resistance;" and taking his nephew's arm, Don Ferdinand left the room, after bidding Donna Clara leave Isabella with the monk as soon as she was restored to consciousness.

Isabella de Marana, whose father had fallen in the Italian wars of the Emperor Charles the Fifth, had been confided by the Count, on his death-bed, to the wardship of Don Ferdinand, believing that one who had fought and bled by his side would be kind to his orphan child; but Don Ferdinand sought for his nephew and heir, a man of extravagant habits and worthless character, the lands of Morana, and he easily obtained from Charles, in return for his faithful services, the command that the heiress should wed with Don Luis. But Isabella, who hated Don Luis with her whole soul, and whose heart was secretly engaged to another, had resolved to accept any alternative rather than bestow her hand on a man she

loathed. It was long 'ere the care of Donna Clara and the monk succeeded in restoring Isabella to consciousness; but Donna Clara, as soon as she saw her sufficiently recovered, obeyed her husband's orders, and left her alone with the friar.

"Save me, save me, father!" cried the maiden, wildly, throwing herself on her knees, as Donna Clara closed the door. "Thou knowest I would prefer death a thousand times to becoming the wife of that man; but not I alone am involved; all who are dear to me will be sacrificed to his hate unless,"——agony choked her voice; she could not proceed.

"You must calm yourself, Isabella," said the monk kindly, "and then, when you are able to think, I will point to you what I consider the best course to pursue

Isabella arose, and, putting back her hair from her brows, opened the lattice and suffered the cool breeze to blow on her feverish temples; by degrees she became calmer, and then Father Dominick came to her side, and, taking her hand in his, tried to soothe her agitation.

"Isabella," he said, fixing his eyes on her expressive face as he spoke, "I am aware that you urge to Don Ferdinand d'Alarcon, as a reason for refusing the hand of his nephew, the harsh and repulsive manners, and the dissolute life of Don Luis. Answer me candidly, since, as your friend, I must know all, are there no other reasons for your refusal?"

Isabella's cheeks for a moment grew crimson; then she again became deadly pale as she answered, some-

what haughtily, "Are not these reasons sufficient why I should decline the honor Don Luis d'Alarcon offers?"

"Donna Isabella, I was the teacher, friend, and am still the confessor of Don Leon Vidal. He loves you to distraction; does he love in vain?"

Again a glow overspread for a moment the cheek of Isabella, as she answered, "Leon is my cousin, and I love him as a dear brother; but he can never be more to me, even did the church allow it."

"And your heart is still free?" said the monk, and then added in a lower voice, "Poor Leon!"

"To what purpose are these questionings, father?"

"I will tell thee, maiden," answered the monk; "hadst thou loved Leon de Vidal, so dear do I hold him that I would have risked all things to make thee his wife; but, as it is, thou hast a choice, Don Luis or the dungeons of the Inquisition. Thou knowest best if thou hast cause to fear them, or if thou art as good a Catholic as thou wouldst make the world believe."

Isabella answered not a word; but she gazed wildly into the monk's face, and became again insensible. Lousada raised her in his arms, and gazed on her with pitying tenderness. "Poor child, poor victim!" he said, "something must be done to save thee, even at some risk to myself."

Alarmed by the call of the monk, who summoned her to the care of her ward, Donna Clara re-entered the apartment, but so deathlike was the faint, that the

physician of the King of France was summoned to the aid of the insensible girl. Gabriel had been struck by the beauty of the young Spanish girl when she appeared before him in all the pride of her radiant loveliness ; but now that she lay before him like a flower broken by the storm, with her long hair falling around her, her closed eyes and deathlike cheeks, he felt as if he could have wept over her as a fond mother over a dying child. But her state required all his skill, and with a heavy heart he ordered the remedies to be administered to her.

As soon as Marguerite of France heard of the dangerous condition of her young attendant, she flew to the bedside, and it was on her pitying face the poor girl looked when she unclosed her aching eyes.

"Save me ! save me !" she wildly ejaculated.

"Save thee from whom, my poor girl ?" said Marguerite kindly. "There is no one here who would harm thee. I fear she raves," she added in a low voice to Gabriel, "or what should cause this excitement ? She was well this morning when she left my brother's apartment."

"She is suffering from a nervous attack, caused by a sudden terror," answered Gabriel in the same low tones, "and her safety depends on the tranquillity of her mind. I have already told Donna Clara this ; but she says it rests with the young lady herself, and with her alone, to remove the cause."

"Poor girl," said Marguerite with a sigh, for she remembered her own ill-omened marriage, "and they

wish her to wed where her heart is not. It is the common fate of the high-born and wealthy, Gabriel."

Isabella again closed her eyes ; but the tears streaming down her cheeks afforded a welcome relief to her overcharged heart ; a bright hope had also entered her bosom, that of escaping to France, and placing herself under the protection of Marguerite, and she determined at the first opportunity to confide all her sorrows to the French princess, whose nobleness of character and kindness of heart were well known to her.

## CHAPTER V.

MORE than a week had elapsed since the events narrated in the last chapter. The visit of the Emperor was postponed, and Isabella, though still pale and suffering, had resumed her attendance on the Princess Marguerite, whose mornings were always passed with her captive brother; she and her maidens employing themselves at the needle, while the physician read or narrated tales, legends, and poetry for the amusement of Francis, who, weak in health, and deprived of every other amusement, gladly availed himself of the talent of Henriques.

Marguerite also, herself a poetess, found a charm in listening to the sweet low tones of the physician; but it was on Isabella de Morana that they made the deepest impression.

Until the coming of Henriques, Isabella had never seen a man who dared openly to announce himself as a Jew; and when any of the race had been spoken of in her presence, it had been as types of everything low and degraded; yet in him she beheld a man of the highest intellect, possessed of great personal beauty, and pre-eminently skilful in the science he professed, and, brought into daily intercourse with him, Isabella suffered her imagination to dwell with a dangerous

intensity upon his perfections, until, absent or present, her thoughts dwelt only with him:

Nor was Gabriel on his side insensible, as we have seen, to the charms of the beautiful Spanish girl ; but, when in the solitude of his chamber he recalled her to mind, and thought with such a partner how blessed his life might have been, he remembered the wide gulf between the heiress of a Spanish grandee of the first class and a poor physician, a Jew ; he strove to banish her every idea from his memory ; but then the morrow again brought her before him, and the struggle began anew.

In the meantime Lousada had visited his nephew daily, under pretence of effecting his conversion, and, in compliance with Gabriel's daily entreaties, he at length promised to procure him an interview with his sister.

The illness of Don Leon de Vidal was the pretext the Dominican made for the visit ; and in the dusk of the evening they set out together for the residence of Donna Beatrice, which was on the upper bank of the Mazaneres.

It was with a quickly beating heart Gabriel found himself entering as a stranger the dwelling of that sister who had been his day-dream for so many years. At his own request Beatrice had been kept in ignorance of their relationship ; she only knew him as the skilful leech to whose care she was about to confide her only son.

The monk and the physician, on their arrival at the

castle, were shown into a small cabinet, richly furnished, in which sat the lady and her son ; the former received them with stately courtesy, while the latter warmly embraced Lousada, as he bade him welcome, and then drew him into a recess where he spoke to him long and eagerly in an undertone.

The physician meantime remained standing, unnoticed by either party.

Donna Beatrice had quietly resumed her work, as if unconscious of his presence, and this neglect afforded him sufficient time to examine her countenance.

It resembled strongly, as Lousada had said, her father's ; but Henriques had known his only when his features were clouded with sadness. Pride was the predominant expression in the face of Beatrice, and Gabriel saw at a glance how impossible it was that she would ever be to him the same as his imagination had so fondly pictured her.

His mother, retaining in her memory the features of the helpless being from whom she had been so cruelly torn, had impressed upon the mind of Gabriel the necessity, should they ever meet, of his being the protector, the guide, the comforter of his sister ; and notwithstanding the shock Lousada had given to this idea by his description of Beatrice, his imagination, spite of his reason, pictured her to him as one who would make amends for the loneliness of his past life. It had been his cherished hope, 'ere he discovered she was rich and great, that, should he ever find his lost sister,



she would go with him to France, and his home would be hers also.

Now he knew how futile were such ideas, and how bitterly he felt the knowledge; it was as if he had lived all his past life in vain.

Gabriel was recalled from these painful thoughts by the voice of Lousada, who summoned him to his patient's side.

In stature and features Leon greatly resembled his mother, but there was more feeling and less pride in the expression of his face; he was moreover languid and pale from long suffering.

"It is my mother's wish," he said in a low sweet voice, "that I seek thy aid, but I know well my disorder is of the mind, and leechcraft can afford little aid to such ailments. For her sake, however, I am willing to try what thy art can effect."

"I will do my best," said Gabriel, touched by his evident sufferings; "but where the disease is of the mind, the means of cure are rather with the patient himself than with the medicine."

"Thou art right, and thou speakest as a man of sense," said Donna Beatrice, as she came to her son's side, and laid her hand on his shoulder. "It is a poor heart, Leon," she added, "that weakly yields to the first disappointment. For shame! arouse thy energies; thou knowest the evil is irremediable; meet it therefore as a man. Did all who meet with disappointments grieve as thou grieveest, the world would soon be unpeopled."

"It is true," said Gabriel, almost unconsciously; for her words had found an echo in his heart.

The Countess, displeased at his presumption, cast on him a look of haughty displeasure, as she continued: "Leave Spain for a time; the Emperor looks already coldly upon thee, because at thy age thou showest no desire for warlike service; serve him, and in the bustle and glory of warfare, thou wilt forget thy ill-omened love."

"Thy mother speaks truth, Leon," said Lousada; "thou mayest trust the physician, therefore I will speak openly before him. Don Luis d'Alarcon hath threatened Isabella, in case of her continued refusal to become his wife, to denounce her, you, and all connected with both, to the Inquisition."

Donna Beatrice turned deadly pale as Lousada spoke, and, grasping her son's arm firmly, said, "Leon, to-morrow you must depart for the army of the Emperor."

"What!" said the young man indignantly, "is it not enough that daily in the sight of God and man I play the hypocrite, acting a part I abhor and despise? shall I also assist in fixing on others the yoke of despotism and bigotry, making them act the part of liars, and refusing them the holiest privilege of mankind, to worship God according to their own conscience, and let them obey the dictates of nature? No! better it were that I confess myself what I am, and lose a life that is burdensome to me."

"Thus do fools and cowards ever argue," said the

Countess scornfully ; " ' I am weary of life because I have not courage to bear the common ills of humanity ! ' And what," she continued vehemently, " is this evil destiny of which you complain so much ? You are young, high-born, wealthy, in full possession of all your faculties ; you have knowledge, intellect, and social position. To overbalance all this you have one sorrow ; you love Isabella de Marana, and you cannot wed her."

" Mother," answered Leon, " is it no sorrow to know that a gulf yawns heavily beneath my feet ? that a moment may render naught all those privileges of which you boast, and hurl me to infamy ?"

Donna Beatrice clenched her hands, and her proud breast heaved as her son spoke ; for she too felt the insecurity of all those worldly honors she so highly prized, and compared to the loss of which the personal danger she incurred was to her as nothing.

" Thou art right, Leon," she said ; " we do stand on the edge of a precipice ; therefore, unless thou wouldst be the murderer of thyself and thy mother, thou wilt join the army at my bidding."

" Never," answered Leon ; " I would rather renounce the world and put on the garb of a monk ; for then at least I shall be freed from the necessity of extending the power of bigotry and intolerance. Thrice happy art thou," he continued, turning to the physician, " that thou hast courage to avow what thou art ; since if men hate and despise thee, thy conscience is clear before thy God !"

"And wouldst thou, Leon," cried his mother passionately, "renounce the high privilege of thy birth, the glorious heritage of thy ancestors, to be the despised of all men, the outcast of the earth, that epitome of all that men call vile, a *Jew*?"

"Mother," said Leon, "in thy injustice and passion wouldst thou belie the race from which we sprang, because mankind in their cruelty both burdened and oppressed the race of Israel, until they have made them wretched outcasts? Wilt thou too aid in heaping contempt upon them? Men have treated them as the vilest of the vile, rendered them the most abject race upon the face of the earth; they trample on them, call them cowards; but hast not thou thyself said the noblest courage is that which endures patiently? The only base ones of the race of Israel are those whom fear or cupidity induces to deny their God."

Beatrice answered not a word; she felt in her heart her son's reproof, and Moses Lousada bowed his head and wept. The physician alone advanced to Leon, and took his hand. "Noble boy," he said, "thou art indeed worthy of thy race, and let it be thy boast, not that thou didst owe thy descent from the lords of Vidal, who for two centuries professed with their tongues that which in their hearts they despised, but that thy grand-sire was Jacob Henriques, who, when Ferdinand and Isabella offered him wealth and honor to deny his God, preferred exile and poverty in a foreign land, rather than he would outwardly even renounce the God of Israel. That he was my father," continued the phy-

sician, "I esteem a prouder boast than to be descended from the Kings of Castile. And thou, Anna Henriques," he continued, turning to his sister, "know that the last thought, the last prayer of thy parents, were for thee; their last wish that, should we ever meet, I should strive to lead thee back to the fold of Israel."

Again Donna Beatrice became pale, and her lip quivered for a moment, as, turning to Lousada, she said: "Does he speak truth?" Lousada bowed his head in token of assent, while Beatrice continued scornfully, "They did not forget then the child they had abandoned?"

"Forget thee!" answered the physician; "thou wert the one thought of their lives. Grief for thee, I verily believe, hurried them to the grave." His voice faltered; he could not proceed, for all the tenderness of his soul was roused by the mention of his parents, and in recalling their affection he felt yet more bitterly the disappointment of his hopes. Beatrice meantime had recovered her composure, and she spoke calmly and deliberately.

"That you are my brother," she said, addressing the physician, "since Lousada vouches for it, I cannot doubt; but the tie of blood alone connects us; in all else we have been and must continue strangers to each other. Let Don Ferdinand d'Alarcon but dream that thou art my brother, and then my own and my son's doom is sealed. For his sake, then, and for mine, let me see thee no more; but here," she continued, drawing

a purse from her bosom, "is gold for thee, and shouldst thou need more, name what sum thou wilt, thou shalt have it ; but depart and leave us in peace."

Gabriel uttered not a word ; one look of unutterable scorn he fixed on her proud face ; then flinging the purse at her feet, he turned and quitted the room. Thus the brother and sister parted.

## CHAPTER VI.

IN silence Gabriel, followed by Lonsada, reached the Alcozar. He made no comment on his sister's words ; his feelings had been too deeply wounded ; but in the solitude of his own chamber, when he recalled to mind all that had passed in his interview with her, he felt that henceforth they must be as strangers. These painful reflections were interrupted by a summons to attend on his royal patient. The physician found Francis in a state of violent excitement, which the Princess Marguerite, who was alone with him, had been vainly trying to soothe.

"It is vain, Marguerite," he said, as Gabriel entered ; "to-day week thou wilt leave me. The deed of abdication is signed in readiness ; I will demand of the Emperor a suitable residence, and suitable attendance, which he dares not refuse, and my business in life is over."

"Nay, Francis," answered the princess, weeping, "this must not be ; thy courage, grace, and talent have been the theme of all Europe ; what a destiny wouldst thou mark out for thyself."

"Wrong me not, Marguerite," answered the king, with a sickly smile, "by supposing that I would choose of my own free-will a path like this ; but shall I see

my people trampled upon and oppressed, my provinces dismembered, to glut this greedy conqueror, who treats me as a corsair would treat a prisoner whom chance had thrown into his hands. My Marguerite, how different would have been my treatment of Charles, had the fortune of war reversed our positions."

"But thou, my brother," said Marguerite, "hast a generous and noble heart; thou wouldst have pitied the fate of a monarch despoiled by the fortune of war of his high position; thou, like Edward of England, wouldst have deemed courtesy to a captive becoming a king. But we will speak of these themes no more to-night, my brother," she added, tenderly; "thy cheeks are flushed, thine eyes are dim; I will bid thee farewell, since Gabriel is here;" and with an affectionate embrace, Marguerite bade her brother good night.

In her own apartment she found Isabella de Marana. The girl was sitting with her face buried in her hands; but she sprang to her feet as the princess entered, and Marguerite felt tears in her eyes, as she saw the look of hopeless despair impressed on the marble cheek of Isabella.

"What ails thee, maiden?" and she took her passive hand in hers. "My heart aches to behold thy sorrow; and, if Marguerite of France can aid thee in aught, thou mayst freely command her services."

"Thanks, a thousand thanks, royal lady," said Isabella; "it is indeed in thy power to help me, shouldst thou so will it."



"Wilt thou confide in me, sweet one? and rest assured that, whatever thy secret may be, it is buried in the breast of Marguerite."

"I will, I must trust thee, noble princess," answered Isabella; "but in doing so I place my life in thy hands."

Gently, and almost with the tenderness of a mother, Marguerite drew the young girl towards her, and printing a kiss on her pale brow, bade her sit on the cushion at her feet, and retaining one of the maiden's hands in her own, listened with interest to Isabella's narrative.

"My father," began the young Spaniard, "was, as thou knowest, royal Marguerite, one of the richest and noblest grandees in Spain, and, unhappily for me, I am his sole heiress. My mother was also of a noble family; but the de Vidals were concealed Jews. My mother was also a Jewess, and in that faith she educated her only child."

Instinctively the French princess dropped the hand of Isabella at this avowal, whilst she exclaimed, with a shudder, "A Jewess!"

All Isabella's proud Spanish blood rushed to her cheek, at the exclamation of the French princess, while she said, "Such was my mother, and such am I; and oh," she added imploringly, "visit not upon me as a crime, that I revere the faith my mother taught me; and shrink with horror from the wedlock my guardian proposes to me, since misery alone can result from it. Lady, thou knowest Don Ferdinand. Harsh and re-

pulsive as he is, he is gentleness itself to the nephew whose wife he would force me to become. I have told thee my secret; but shouldst thou breathe to mortal what I have this night trusted to thee, thou wouldst kindle my funeral pile. But aid, oh aid me, sweet lady, to quit a land wherein I live hourly in terror, and the prayers of the orphan shall be thine."

"Show me but the means, and I will use them, if it be in my power," said Marguerite; "but know that in ten days I set out on my return to France."

"Take me with thee," said Isabella, imploringly; "take me with thee. I am willing to forfeit all lands, title, rank; let me be the meanest of thy servants, but give me leave to live in peace, and worship according to my conscience."

"Isabella," said Marguerite, "France, like Spain, hath driven the race of Israel from her soil."

"But thy brother,—he hath a Jewish physician."

"It is true," said Marguerite, thoughtfully; "and perchance, if thou wouldst trust him, he may aid us to devise some plan of escape. What sayst thou, maiden, since he is of thy creed?"

"As thou wilt, madam; I leave my fate in thy hands. To-morrow the Emperor comes to Madrid, and two days hence my bridal is fixed with Don Luis d'Alarcon."

"So soon?" said Marguerite. "Then indeed thou hast no time to lose. Canst thou not contrive to delay it until the time fixed for my departure?"

"Don Ferdinand hath already complained to the

Emperor of what he calls my obstinacy ; and Charles, enraged that his order should be disputed, has commanded that there shall be no farther delay under any circumstances."

"Poor maiden!" said Marguerite, thoughtfully ; "I fear, unless the physician devise some plan, thou art lost. I will seek Gabriel ; he is with my brother ;" and Marguerite rose to seek the physician.

Gabriel's heart beat wildly as he listened to the narrative of Marguerite. To love Isabella de Marana, the heiress of one of the noblest houses in Spain, a Christian maiden, had been madness ; but to love the fugitive Jewess, flying from all that had placed her above him, was natural ; and the thought that he was asked to save her sent the blood wildly running through his veins, and for the first time in his life he felt his heart bound with a sensation of perfect happiness, as he replied to Marguerite's request, "That if it were in the power of man, he would save the devoted girl from the fate that threatened her."

When Gabriel returned to his own apartment he found Moses Lousada there, and to him he imparted what had passed in his interview with Marguerite, and implored his advice and assistance.

"Isabella has kept her secret well," said the monk, since even I never dreamed that she was one of us, although I knew that her mother, the sister of De Vidal, was of the Jewish blood. She must be saved, however, and there is but one way of doing this, and that is by denouncing her to the Inquisition."

"How mean you?" said the physician, hastily; "surely that would be the very way to destroy her."

"Not so," answered Lousada; "there are no other means of delivering her from the vigilance of Don Ferdinand. From the dungeons of the Inquisition I have power to deliver her, but not from the Alcazar of Madrid."

"And then wilt thou not incur danger in this?"

"I am weary of the life I am leading; I am old, and much longer cannot expect to burden the earth. If my plan succeed, I too will leave this accursed country; if I be discovered, let them take the existence which has for many years been a curse to me. And now listen to what I propose for the safety of Isabella."

Distinctly Lousada then sketched out a plan by which he hoped to preserve Isabella, by denouncing her to the Inquisition, and then effecting her escape from the dungeon by means of the jailor, also a concealed Jew, and devoted to him, who would accompany them in their flight, for which he would provide the means, if Gabriel would obtain the royal word of Marguerite that they should be safe in France until they could repair to the Holy Land, where Lousada proposed ending the remnant of his life.

From his interview with his uncle, Gabriel once more sought the presence of Marguerite, when he rapidly unfolded to her so much of Lousada's plans as he deemed it requisite for her to know; and then Marguerite summoned Isabella to her presence.

A great change had taken place in the Spanish girl since we first presented her to the reader ; her cheeks and lips had lost every tinge of colour ; constant weeping had rendered her eyes heavy, and her step was slow and tottering.

Marguerite was much struck by the change in her appearance, and it was in tones of the tenderest pity she imparted to her a scheme, that to the princess appeared full of hazard, and terrible in the extreme.

To Isabella, however hazardous, anything was happiness compared with the misery that awaited her in Spain, and she gladly acceded to the plans of Lousada, even although those plans compelled her to pass eight days in the prisons of that fearful tribunal which had filled her with dread even from her infancy.

## CHAPTER VII.

AFTER the departure of Gabriel and Lousada, on the evening of the physician's visit to his sister, Leon de Vidal and his mother stood gazing for some minutes in silence on each other—on Leon's brow stood sorrow and indignation, while on that of Beatrice scornful anger alone was visible. She it was who first broke silence.

"Leon," she said, and every trace of passion was banished from her voice, and the tones were haughty and calm as usual, "the honor of thy father's house and thy own safety—I will not say mine, since that weighs but little with thee—require thou shalt set out for the seat of war to-morrow. I will waste no farther words in entreaty; but if thy mother's blessing be of any value to thee, thou wilt demand it on thy departure to-morrow. No more," she added impatiently, seeing he was about to speak; "in the morning I await thy answer;" and, gathering her flowing robes about her, with a haughty step she swept from the apartment, leaving Leon to meditate on her last words.

Painful indeed were the reflections of the young man when thus thrown upon his own thoughts, for he was at war with himself. A Jew and a Spanish noble,

how wide was the difference the cruelty of the age had made between the two ! and yet this double character he was called on to enact. But how ? To be true to the one, ought he not to cast away the other ? But to which should he be fixed ? On the one hand were rank, wealth, and his mother's blessing ; on the other degradation and danger, perhaps a fearful death, should he fail in escaping from Spain. Yet, with all this risk, every pure and holy impulse of Leon's clung to Judaism. He felt that the time was come for him to make a change, either to renounce utterly the religion of Moses, and live as he had hitherto lived, or to leave all which embellished his life, and seek in another land the freedom of worship denied in his own.

Not long did he hesitate ; for Leon's was a noble heart, full of the best kind of courage, the courage of endurance. " I have hitherto," he said to himself, " weighed but worldly advantages and disadvantages ; true, the opinion of the world is a fearful ordeal ; but there is one thing yet more to be feared and dreaded, the anger of God ; and should I persist in placing worldly temptations before His love, how shall I appear to Him on that dread day when the guilty are summoned to answer for the sins of the flesh ? Now," he added aloud, " my part is taken ; henceforth I renounce all, as my grandsire did before me, life, heritage, rank, or even that which I prize more than all, a mother's blessing, to be true to the worship of my God."

Thus did Leon de Vidal cast away every worldly

interest, every dream of the past, and devote himself to God alone, after his interview with his uncle, praying for strength to resist the pleadings of his mother, and to go forward in the right path. Of Isabella he dared not trust himself to think ; he knew that she loved him not ; and thenceforth, in the new path he had chosen, he felt that they would be as strangers. Like Moses Lousada, Leon determined, if possible, to fix his abode in the Holy Land, and by works of charity and usefulness, combined with the study of the law, and the rigid practice of religion, to atone for the omissions his past life had rendered a matter of necessity.

Leaving his mother was to Leon the most painful thought of all the deprivations to which he felt his choice would oblige him. Although Beatrice had never been a tender parent, Leon loved her as a son should love a mother ; and he knew that his departure would deeply wound both her pride and her affection. He felt also that to depart without her blessing would be a severe trial ; but he was too well acquainted with her nature to hope for it, after what had passed at their last interview. In reflections like these, Leon passed the night, until at length, overcome by drowsiness, he flung himself on a couch and fell into a profound slumber. How long he slept he knew not ; but a murmur of voices near by awakened him. The sun was declining in the west ; he had slumbered a whole day, and his mother and Moses Lousada were standing beside him. Leon was struck with alarm at the expression of his mother's face when he turned his



eyes towards her ; horror and dismay were plainly pictured upon it as she murmured the name of Isabella.

"What of her?" said Leon, convulsively.

"She is in the prison of the Inquisition," answered Beatrice, "arrested on the suspicion of Judaism."

Leon uttered a wild cry, and sank senseless at the feet of his mother. All the woman in the heart of Beatrice was aroused at this sight ; she called loudly for assistance, while, with the help of Moses Lousada, she raised his head, and supported it on her bosom, and scalding tears, the first she had shed since her husband's death, forced themselves from her eyes and fell on the pale brow of her son.

At length Leon opened his eyes, and, dismissing her attendant, Beatrice strove by gentle and tender words, such as she seldom used, to calm his agitation ; but he entreated to be left alone with Moses Lousada, as, beneath the influence of such unaccustomed tenderness, he feared for his new resolution ; and, after some hesitation, Beatrice complied with his request. When alone with Leon, Lousada revealed to him the whole secret of Isabella's detention, and his plans for her future safety, and his own flight. Eagerly did Leon now petition to share in the enterprize, and accompany his dearest friend in search for a new home ; and, touched by his entreaties, Lousada at length consented that Leon should be one of the companions of his flight, provided he could gain the consent of his mother, or at least that he would not depart without her knowledge. To the latter stipulation Leon agreed ; the first he knew was hopeless.

## CHAPTER VIII.

It was the fourth night after the imprisonment of Isabella de Marana, and, although the bell had struck the hour of midnight, she still walked her cell, listening to catch the slightest sound which might indicate the approach of a visitor.

The maiden was in total darkness, since the Inquisition did not allow any lights in the cells of its victims, and the jailor, fearful of exciting suspicion, had not dared to afford any indulgence to his fair prisoner.

Isabella felt her blood creep, and a sensation of horror thrill through her veins, as she heard at times the groans of some unhappy sufferer in the cells near to her, and thought of what her own fate would be should Lousada abandon her, or his scheme fail.

She had that morning received, through the medium of the jailor, an intimation that the monk, with Gabriel, would visit her at midnight. The time had arrived, yet they came not. Could they have been discovered?

The thought was too fearful to dwell upon; the unhappy prisoner arose and paced the limits of her cell, striving to find in motion some relief to the anguish of her mind. Suddenly she heard the door of her prison open, and Lousada, bearing a light, and followed by Gabriel, stood before her. At the sight of Gabriel,

Isabella felt the blood rush to her cheeks, while his voice faltered, and the tears came into his eyes, as he greeted her.

"I must leave the physician to explain all our plans to thee," said Lousada, in a low voice: "but remember to be careful how ye speak, for should the slightest suspicion be awakened, all our dooms would be sealed. I must seek the jailor, for to-morrow night we must fly." So saying, with cautious steps he quitted the cell, and the lovers—for such in truth they were—were left alone. Gabriel was the first to break silence.

"Lady," he said, "I bear a message from thy cousin, the noble Leon de Vidal, to thee. I saw him to-day, when he came to the palace to consult Lousada respecting his future life; but, as he has determined to leave Spain, he wishes thy consent that he may accompany thee and Lousada as thy escort, until he sees thee safe under the protection of the Duchess d'Alencon in France; and then he purposes to bid thee farewell for ever, and embark with Lousada for the Holy Land."

"I shall be glad of my cousin's company," said Isabella, slightly blushing; "but let him understand"—She paused as she remembered it was a stranger and a man to whom she spoke, and the sentence remained unfinished.

For a moment Gabriel waited; but seeing she spoke no more, he again addressed her: "And for thy own plans, lady, for the future—will it be too presumptuous

in me, a stranger as I am, to ask if thou hast formed none?"

"Alas!" answered Isabella, "a fugitive and an orphan, I shall be friendless, almost penniless, since I know not how long it may be safe even for Marguerite of France to protect me. Should I even succeed in escaping my present danger, which is still doubtful, the future is indeed uncertain."

The reader may guess the reply of Gabriel, and, as he is in the secret of Isabella's affections, he will not be surprised to learn that before Lousada's return they were affianced to each other.

## CHAPTER IX.

IT was on the bank of the river Bidassoa, some days after the date of our last chapter, that a party consisting of four persons were assembled ; three of them wore the dress of monks, and the fourth was in the garb of a nun. They had all evidently ridden hard, as their horses showed, and a boat was now drawn up close to the bank, ready to receive them.

Long and anxiously did the leader of the party look toward the Spanish side of the river ; at length, in a voice betokening deep disappointment, he said—

“ The princess comes not, and we risk our lives by remaining here. At any rate, we are safer in the boat ; let us enter.”

His companions followed his advice ; and they had scarcely seated themselves, when they observed a large company on horseback turn the brow of the hill, followed by another, evidently in pursuit. Lonsada and his fellow fugitives—for it was they—when they recognized the Spanish garb of these last, gave themselves up for lost.

The Duchess, however, and her suite reached the banks first, rapidly dismounted, and entered a large boat that awaited them some distance further down

the stream than the one that contained the fugitive Jews.

When the party that pursued Marguerite of France found that she had entered the boat, they turned their horses' heads once more in the direction of Madrid, while the smaller boat, now gaining upon that which contained the French, the two together reached, without further danger, the other side of the Bidassoa.

When Marguerite reached the spot appointed for her resting-place, she sent for Isabella, who, to avoid observation, still wore the dress of a nun, and questioned her respecting her escape, and that of her companions. Isabella explained to the princess, that on the seventh midnight after her confinement, her jailor had brought her the dress of a nun, and bade her be prepared to set out the next day for a long journey.

Accordingly, the next night, they left the dungeons by a secret path, and at a short distance found the guides who were to accompany them on their journey, which they had accomplished without accident, but, Isabella added, they were alarmed by the pursuers of Marguerite. The duchess smiled as she said—

“Ay, Isabella, but for the fleetness of my steed, I should now perhaps have been half way to Madrid, since the Emperor, aware that I carried with me a deed which may lose him the fruits of his victory, sought to tear it from me by force.”

Marguerite alluded to the act of abdication which, it is well known, the King had delivered to her in case

the Emperor should still persist in his ungenerous demands.

As Isabella had said to Marguerite, Lousada had taken his measures so well that nothing had occurred to retard the flight of the fugitives.

On their journey Leon had again vainly urged his suit to Isabella ; but her answer had excluded all hope from his mind, and he now only waited to hear once more from his mother, in answer to a letter he had sent imploring forgiveness, and then he was prepared to part from his cousin, who proposed remaining some time with Marguerite in France, and to devote the rest of his life to his suffering brethren.

Gabriel had returned to France with Marguerite, as the state of the King's health no longer demanded his attention ; and, but for the attractions of Isabella's presence, he too would have sought the Holy Land with his uncle and nephew. But the answer to Leon's letter made a change in the prospects of both Isabella and the physician.

Beatrice de Vidal, on her son's flight, had been denounced with him as a Jewish heretic. Timely warning had enabled her to save herself by flight, and she was now in Africa, dangerously ill, and wished her son to join her there. Leon urged the physician and Isabella to accompany them to a land where they might enjoy freedom and safety ; while Marguerite also, unwilling to endanger the future safety of the Spanish maiden, and uncertain how far her protection

of Isabella might involve her in the censure of the Church, urged her to seek the abode of her aunt. Isabella was a magnet to draw Gabriel wherever she went; accordingly he determined on leaving the service of the French King and removing to Africa.

Little more remains to be told. Anna de Vidal—for she had dropped her title—when she escaped from Spain, fallen from her high estate, was forced to subsist on the produce of her son's industry, who had commenced business as a jeweller with the proceeds of the valuables he had taken with him. Gabriel, whose skill as a physician was soon discovered, was taken into the service of the African prince, on whose domains they had settled, and married Isabella.

On the death of Beatrice, who died within a few months of their departure from Spain, Leon removed with Lousada to the Holy Land, and there spent his life in deeds of active benevolence, following the pursuit of commerce only, that it might furnish him the means of aiding others.

On the death of Lousada, Leon married the daughter of a merchant, an amiable and beautiful woman, who, if she did not efface entirely the memory of his early love, at least made his home happy.

Isabella de Marana, blest in her marriage and free to follow the dictates of her conscience, never once regretted the brilliant heritage of which she had voluntarily deprived herself. Beatrice de Vidal, Leon, Isabella, and Lousada, were burnt in effigy at the

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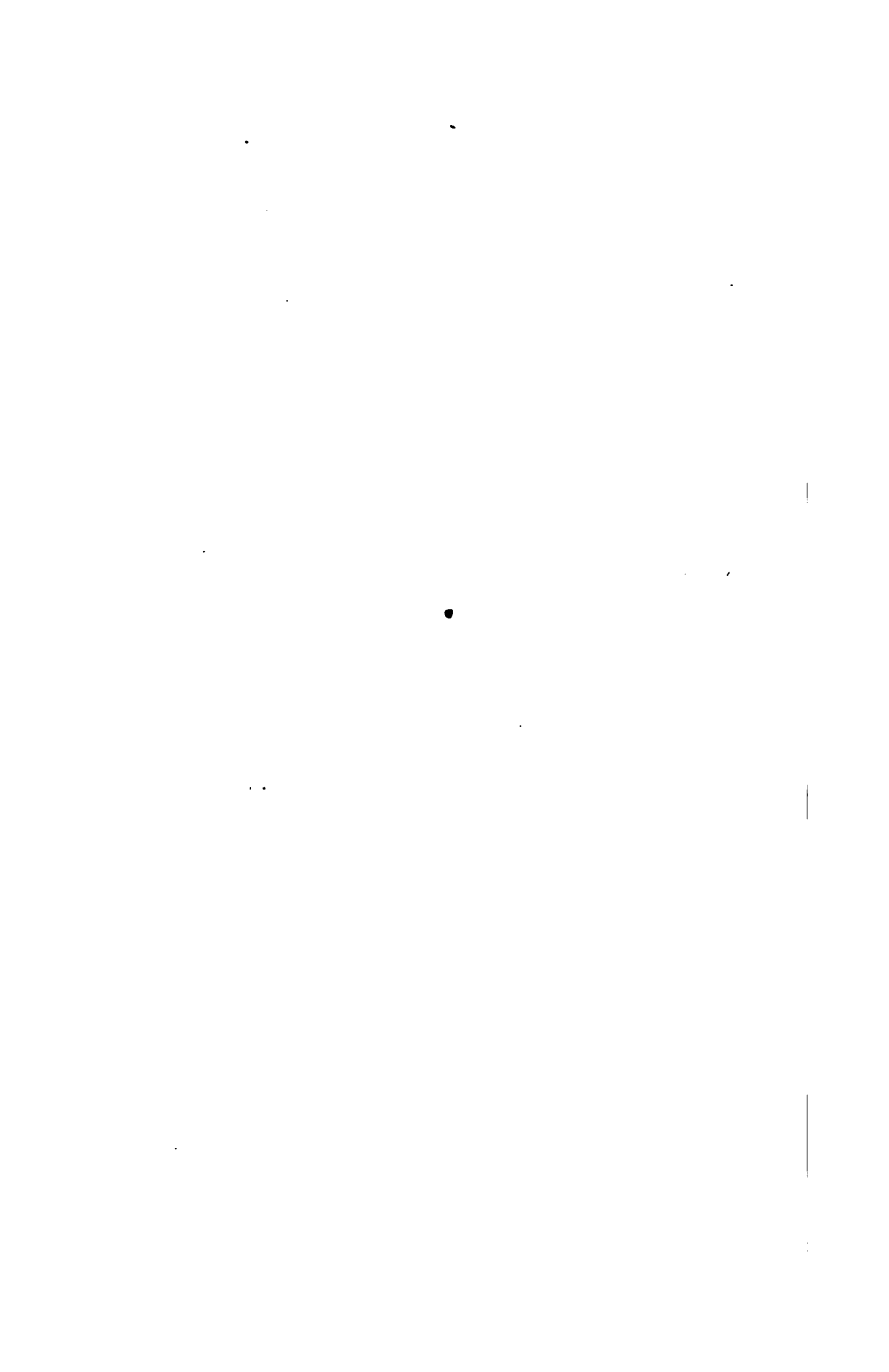
next *auto da fe*, which took place after their flight ; but this affected them little, as in renouncing Spain, they had renounced all cares in connection with it for ever.

THE END.

G E R T R U D E ;

OR,

CLOUDS AND SUNSHINE.



# GERTRUDE;

OR,

CLOUDS AND SUNSHINE.

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MY first recollections are of a beautiful home in one of the finest suburbs of a large German town. There was about my dwelling everything that taste or elegance could require, indicating the possessor to be a man of great wealth. Servants waited on my slightest wish, and until I reached my twelfth year, my life was all happiness. My mother, in the absence of my father whom I scarcely remembered, resided with her husband's parents, and of course I, who was an only child, was petted and indulged by all parties. But suddenly there came a sad change—a shadow fell upon our prospects that was never wholly removed. One day, how well I remember it, I was playing in the garden with a cousin, a few years older than myself, a medical student, and the son of my father's only sister. His

parents were both dead, and he, with an elder brother then in England, had been reared and educated by my grandfather. Ernest, who always called me his little wife, was twining flowers in my hat, when my grandfather entered the path where we stood. "Gertrude," he said, and his voice was so low and husky with grief, that, child as I was, it startled me, "come into the house, your mother needs you." With a chill at my heart I followed him into the breakfast room. My mother and grandmother were there, but both so pale, that, terrified, I began to weep; then my mother caught me in her arms, and gave way to such a wild burst of anguish as only comes from a stricken heart, while my grandmother kept rocking herself backwards and forwards with clasped hands and moaning piteously, but without speaking or shedding a tear. When my mother, in broken words, at length told me I had no longer a father, I could not comprehend the depth of her sorrow, for to me he was already but a memory, and I wept only because others did so. An hour or two after the first intelligence of the calamity which had befallen us, my mother, as I was too young to keep "Shiva,"\* sent me to Madame Berthald's, a friend and relative, at whose house I had always been a frequent visitor. I remained at Madame Berthald's two weeks. At the end of that time she called me to her, and taking my hand in hers, she said gently, "Gertrude, my love, you will return home to-morrow,

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\* "Shiva," a seven days of mourning kept by members of the Jewish faith on the death of a near relative.

but before you go, dear child, I wish to prepare you for the change that awaits you, and unless I, who have known you from infancy, greatly misjudge you, such change will be borne bravely. It is no longer to a splendid mansion that my Gertrude will return. Have they told you how your poor father died, my darling?" I shook my head; I could not speak. "Well," she continued, drawing me still closer to her, while her voice sank to a whisper, "the ship was wrecked in which he was returning from America, and with him perished also your grandfather's wealth: he has given up what remained here to his creditors, and a trifling income is all that is left to him. Besides this, your grandmother has never recovered the shock of her son's death, and it is greatly to be feared that she never will. But you are weeping, my poor child," she said, checking her recital; "ah! would I had better tidings to impart." "Pray, go on," I said, "tell me of my mother." "She is well in body," answered Madame Berthald, "but she sorrows more on your account than she should. She fears that you, nurtured as you have been in the enjoyment of every luxury, will pine for the indulgence it is no longer in her power to grant. Shall it be so, Gertrude?" "Never, never!" I exclaimed, "will I grieve my darling mother by selfish repining; while I have her to love me, what more can I desire?" "That is what I hoped and expected of you, dear child," said Madame Berthald, folding me in her arms, "and remember that sorrow as well as joy comes from the Lord." The next day

Madame Berthald took me home. It was well that I was prepared for a change. A small, gloomy-looking house it was, in a dark, narrow street ; no garden, no pictures, the furniture simple even to meanness, yet my mother's taste had arranged it with such neatness that an air of comfort and cheerfulness reigned over all. She herself looked wan and thin, and her black dress made her pale cheek look still paler. She opened her arms to embrace me, and a quiet tear came with the kiss she imprinted on my trembling lips. Madame Berthald parted with me on the threshold, and my mother led me into the parlour and said, in her low sweet tones, " Welcome to your new home, my Gertrude," while my grandfather folded me in his arms and blessed me. I looked towards my grandmother. There she sat, rocking herself backwards and forwards as she had done on the day she received the tidings of her son's death, but she gave me no sign of recognition. " Go to her, Gertrude," whispered my mother ; " the sight of you may work a change in her ; anything is better than this stony silence." Awe-stricken and terrified, I went to her and kissed her cold lips, but she took no notice of me—her intellects were gone for ever. Days, weeks, and months passed on ; and one day was so like another, that but for the coming of the blessed Sabbath, when my cousin was always with us, I could hardly have borne the weary monotony of our existence, deprived as I was of every source of enjoyment. My grandfather passed his time in reading devotional works ; my grandmother rocked herself to

and fro; and my mother, save when employed in completing my education, toiled incessantly at a kind of embroidery in which she excelled, to support herself and me. Patient, enduring, and self-denying, trusting firmly in God, my mother strove by example and precept to strengthen my mind, and fit me for any path in life. She was truly a religious woman, and her life was a commentary on her faith. But Ernest's presence was like a ray of sunshine to a prisoner in a dark dungeon, and to him I could freely speak of our past happiness, which I never did to my mother lest she should think me discontented and unhappy, especially when I saw that for my sake she exerted herself to be cheerful. Yet how could I help growing up pale, silent and thoughtful beyond my years.

When I was about eighteen, I began to notice a change in my mother, with whom I had for some months been working. At first she greatly excelled me in the quantity of her work, but, latterly, many times the work would drop from her hands, and faints of the most alarming kind would overcome her. Ernest happened to be present at one of these attacks, and he instantly sent for the physician under whom he studied. Until then I had never dreamed of danger to my beloved mother, but that night—oh! even now, after the lapse of so many years, the memory overcomes me.

"Miss Gertrude," the physician said, in answer to my anxious enquiries, "I dare not deceive you; no earthly means will suffice to restore your mother to health and strength; she may linger weeks, perhaps



months, but she must be kept from all exertion or excitement. I know this is a heavy trial to you, my poor child," he continued, taking my hands in his, as he saw the tears gathering in my eyes, "but we must all submit to the will of God. *He* will be father and mother to you." What more he said I know not, for after vainly struggling with my tears, they broke forth in such bitter heartrending sobs as defied all restraint and control. My father's death, although it had changed my position, had grieved me more from its effect on those I loved than from the keenness of my own feelings: he had quitted home when I was a mere infant, and I knew him only from report; but my mother—oh! she was my all—mother, companion, and friend; my trust in her, my love for her, was unbounded; how could I live without her? I know not how long my wild grief continued, when I felt an arm round my neck, and my head was pillowed on my mother's bosom, while she said, in her low, sweet voice, "Gertrude, my own darling." How my heart smote me then, that in my selfish grief I had forgotten her, and I laid my burning cheek against her thin, pale face, and strove to compose the agony of my feelings. Ernest was by her side; he too looked pale and sorrow-stricken, for my mother had supplied to him the place of his own. That night I lay with my mother's arms around me, listening to the holy words with which she strove to strengthen me for the coming trial. She told me that she too had been a motherless orphan at an early age, and she knew my feelings from

what she had suffered. Then she spake also of Ernest, and told me how he loved me with more than a brother's love, and how he had promised to be my stay and comforter; but, more than all, she bade me put trust in Him who had promised to be a father to the fatherless. Nor did she forget to speak of my grandparents. She told me I owed it to them to sustain their helplessness, and I felt rebuked, while listening to her calm and holy words, that I had thought only of my own sufferings, and had not remembered them or her. My mother quietly prepared from that night for the change that awaited her. It came slowly but surely. Day by day she grew weaker, yet God gave me strength to cheer and comfort her last hours. But when she was gone, in my loneliness and desolation I wished that I too might die, till I remembered my poor old grandfather, and when he said, "Gertrude, you and Ernest are all that are left to me," I thought of the words of the dead, and I determined to take example by her, and do my duty by the father of my father.

Ernest helped to sustain my resolution by his tender sympathy. He had finished his studies and begun to practise as a medical man, and he would often speak cheerfully of the time when he should have a home to offer me. My grandfather's income was so small that it required my utmost diligence at my needle to supply the comforts his declining years required; and often, when I looked up from my work, I found the old man's eyes fixed upon me with such a look of pitying tender-

ness, that my own would fill with tears. Thus two years—two long, weary years—went by, and Ernest was my only comfort. The constant monotony of my life, added to unceasing toil at the needle, had robbed my face of every tinge of colour, and caused my figure to become thin and stooping. Often as I sat at work I would wonder that Ernest, who was the very impersonation of manly beauty, and in the full bloom of youth and health, should choose a woman who was his very opposite. Sometimes when we were together my thoughts would be spoken in words ; then he would laugh joyously, and say, “ There will come a time when my little Gertrude will be again as bright and cheerful as when we chased butterflies and twined garlands together in our dear old home, and the joys of her maturer years shall repay her for the troubles of her youth.” Alas, he little knew what we should both have to endure ’ere that time came. Who could bear to live were not the future mercifully hidden from us ?

One evening, soon after the above conversation, Ernest came to me, his face radiant with joy. “ Gertrude,” he said, “ put down your work, I must speak with you alone.” I glanced towards my grandfather ; he had fallen asleep. My grandmother sat in her usual attitude, but as she never at any time spoke or noticed me, I rose up and followed Ernest. “ Gertrude,” he said, as we entered the other room, “ my own darling, the time is come when I can reward you for long years of patient suffering. Dr. Goldstien told me

to-day that he intends to retire immediately from his profession, and that he will relinquish to me his practice, his house, and his furniture. I will not tell you," he continued, with a bright smile, "how he spoke about my Gerty; but he said, as he had no children of his own, it would make him happy to promote and witness our happiness. But what ails you, Gertrude," he continued, suddenly looking up, "you are not glad, you are weeping." It was true; his joy had awakened no answering expression in my soul; it seemed to me a dream too bright to be lasting. For an instant Ernest stood regarding me with a displeased and wondering glance, and then there came over his beautiful face a look of inexpressible tenderness. "My poor darling," he said, "I had forgotten; your life has been so lonely and sad, and your nerves have been so shattered by toil and care, that it will take you a time to get accustomed to happiness. Fear not, beloved, a bright and happy future is before us, and the past will be remembered as a painful dream." There was a sad foreboding at my heart in spite of all the efforts of my reason, and I could not shake it off. When we returned to the room we had quitted, it was affecting to see the joy of my poor old grandfather: How lovingly he pressed me to his heart as he said, "God be praised, I shall no longer see the shadow on thy face, beloved child, which hath made thee old 'ere thy girlhood has passed. Thou wilt laugh as thou hast never done since thy childhood, and perchance I shall nurse a child of thine on my knees before I die; and yet," he

continued, "the light will go out from my dwelling when thou leavest it, but better this than that thou shouldst pine and die like thy poor mother." Moved by one impulse, Ernest and I threw our arms round the old man's neck, while we exclaimed, "We will have no home thou canst not share with us." Next evening, when Ernest came, he was pale and his finger was bound up. "It is nothing," he said, in answer to my look of alarm; "a slight cut merely, it will soon be better." But instead of the cut soon healing, as he predicted, the hand first, and then the arm, began to swell. His head ached intensely, and three days after that in which he had been so happy, Ernest was unable to leave home. My grandfather called on him, but unwilling to alarm me, he made light of his suffering. Next day he was worse, and determined to know the truth, I went with my grandfather to his dwelling. We met Dr. Goldstien at the door. "I was coming to you, Miss Gertrude," he said; "I wish to speak with you." "It is, then, as I foreboded," I answered, as calmly as I could speak; "Ernest is worse, perhaps dying." "No, not dying," said the physician; "I may even say his life is in no danger, provided that he will listen to good advice. And now, my dear girl," he continued, "summon all your fortitude for what I have to tell, since it may be that the life of your betrothed depends on your calmness." I was calm; I could feel the blood recede from my face and lips, and my voice sank almost to a whisper as I bade him tell me all, but I shed no tear. "Poor thing, poor thing,"

murmured the physician, while he looked at me as he had done on the day he told me of my mother's state, "this is a sad trial. Ernest cut himself," he continued, in a tender tone, and looking away from me, "four days ago; the wound was slight, a mere scratch, but it was done with a dissecting knife, the wound is poisoned, his hand and arm are fearfully swollen, and the loss of his arm can alone preserve his life. I told him so this morning, and he answered me, "Better to die than live helpless and hopeless, with all my life's hopes overthrown. In vain I urged him, and to you alone I look for influence to overcome his decision." When Dr. Goldstien ceased speaking, I stood for some moments silent, inwardly praying to Him who alone could give me strength in such a moment. My grandfather and Dr. Goldstien stood mutely regarding me, and when my prayer was over, I begged the latter to lead me to Ernest. How can I describe the change in my cousin since I had last beheld him? His large black eyes were hollow and wild-looking, his face deadly pale, while his black hair lay in tangled masses on the pillow, as in the restlessness of suffering he tossed his head from side to side. I could scarcely repress a cry, but I did repress it, and came towards him. "Gertrude," he exclaimed, as he saw me, "alas! alas! it was a just foreboding that made thee weep instead of smile, when our future looked so bright. Oh, my beloved, I shall die, and thou wilt never know how fondly I have loved thee, the playmate of my childhood. Oh, God! oh, God! this is

fearful." "Ernest," I said, trying to speak calmly, "the reality is dark enough, but you would make it darker still. Dr. Goldstien tells me your life is not in danger if you will consent to lose your arm. "Never, never!" he exclaimed, wildly. "What! live to be a helpless cripple, a burden instead of a support to all I love. No, no, Gertrude, your life has been joyless enough. My dream day and night has been to release you from its dreary monotony, its never-ending toil, and shall I live now to rivet more firmly the chain I hoped to break; shall I too be a burden upon you?" "Hear me, Ernest," I said, taking his unwounded hand in mine; "your love has ever been the ray of light that has illumined the darkness of my life. I cannot remember the time when I first began to love you, but my affection has grown and strengthened until it is entwined with my very existence. I live but in your life, and if you die I shall die also." "It is enough, Gertrude," he answered; "you have conquered; for your sake I will try to live." "He consents," I cried, as Dr. Goldstien opened the door; "quick, quick, 'ere it is too late." Were my life to number twice the space allotted to me, never, never, could I forget all the mental torture of that day. I refused to return home. I stood by calmly while they prepared bandages and such things as were needful for the operation. I neither wept nor fainted when the surgeons ascended to his room. I stood with clasped hands listening, every faculty absorbed in the sense of hearing, but there was no sound, not even a groan, to

break that dreadful stillness. Unable to bear the torturing suspense, I stole upstairs and listened at the door. When I distinctly heard the sawing of the bone, *his* bone, I fled downstairs to the parlour, and burying my face in the sofa cushions, moaned, "O, Father in Heaven, have mercy, spare him to me." Dr. Goldstien found me thus. "Gertrude," he said, "it is over; he sleeps at present, and I hope by to-morrow to be able to pronounce him out of danger. You had better take some refreshment and return home, that you may take some rest; and remember, Ernest will require a cheerful companion as well as a tender nurse. You must for his sake husband your strength, for I must not disguise from you that his ultimate recovery depends on his being kept from despair." I took the cordial my kind friend offered, and as he assured me that the powerful opiate Ernest had taken would keep him sleeping that night, I returned home to pray in the solitude of my chamber for him who was all the world to me. The next day I took my place by the bedside of Ernest. Dr. Goldstien insisted on a skilful nurse sharing my toil; he too showed me the kindness of a father, and yet there were times when I was ready to sink under the burden of my sorrow, especially when Ernest would hold my hand and suffer the silent tears to fall on it. It is *so* trying to see a man weep. Slowly, very slowly, he recovered health and strength, and his mind recovered even more slowly than his body from the shock that had prostrated it, but he submitted to the Almighty hand that had chastened him, and he

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thanked me more than once for saving him from self-murder, for such in effect would have been his refusal to submit to amputation. Day by day, as he grew stronger, would he ponder over the means to obtain a livelihood, and more than once when I looked up from my work I have seen his eyes full of tears and his lips working with inward emotion.

One day, more than six months after his accident, I had received an order for a larger quantity of work than usual, and as it was wanted in a short time, I had to sit up half the night to finish it. I woke the next morning with a violent headache. In vain I bathed my eyes and face with cold water. Nothing would relieve the pain, and when I came to breakfast both my grandfather and Ernest, who now resided with us, gazed on me with pitying eyes. "It is nothing," I said, replying to their looks, "a little headache, that is all." After a nearly untasted breakfast, Ernest asked me to walk with him, and feeling that I needed the refreshment of the air, I put on my bonnet, and we went out.

Unconsciously we took a path that led us past our dear old home. A group of merry children were in the garden chasing butterflies, as we had chased them, lighthearted and happy, years ago. The sight unnerved me, I had been sorely tried. Weary, heart-sick, almost hopeless, I turned aside and burst into tears. Poor Ernest ! he looked at me with an anguish that needed not words, and drawing my arm silently through his, we left the place, and entered a public garden. It

was still very early, and we were its only occupants. "Gertrude," said Ernest, when with an effort I had resumed my usual self-control, "it is time for me to look my prospects firmly in the face. I am now well, at least as well as ever I can be again. Dr. Goldstein, although he was as a father to me in the time of my suffering, is not a wealthy man. What he intended to do for me is frustrated by this unhappy accident. I can never practise as a medical man again. I have received a letter from my brother, who is settled as a dentist in London. My grandfather wrote to acquaint him with my misfortune, and he offers me a home with him, and expresses his certain conviction that he can procure me lucrative employment as a professor of the German language. What say you, Gertrude?" I had long seen that inaction was preying fatally on Ernest's health and spirits, and I should have gladly hailed any prospect that did not involve separation, but that he would leave me had never entered my thoughts. We had grown up together, he had been to me always a solace and a comforter, but *now* I should be utterly alone. It was well for me at that moment that I had been so long schooled in suffering and self-denial, that after a moment's silence I could say, "Do what you think best, dearest Ernest, and I will be contented." "What else can I do, Gertrude," he said passionately; here I am useless, totally useless, and it maddens me to see you wearing out health and strength, and perhaps to see you sink, as your mother did before you, into an early grave. No, since one channel is closed, I

must seek another. I will accept my brother's offer ; perchance our happiness is delayed, not destroyed." We sat some time longer, and then, with a heavy heart, I proposed we should return home. On our way through the streets we saw a crowd assembled round a public building, "What is it ?" asked Ernest. "A lottery office," was the answer. "Come, Gertrude," said Ernest, while one of his old bright smiles illumined his face, "I too have a fancy to try my fortune. I will leave you a lottery ticket as a keepsake." I did not object ; a ticket was purchased, and we returned home. My grandfather was consulted respecting Ernest's departure, and he fully approved of a step which he believed would be for his benefit. Ernest appeared to recover health and animation while the preparations for his voyage were making, and even I could not avoid partaking somewhat in his sanguine hopes ; it was so sweet to look forward to a better future. I will pass over the parting—the hopeful promises of Ernest, the sense of loneliness that came over me when I had no longer his voice and step to listen for. But I had no time for the indulgence of sorrow. I must work to live, and that others might live, and in the evenings my grandfather would take me out in the calm air, and as we walked he would pour into my ear the consolations of a pure religious trust and the hope of better days. In due time we received a letter from Ernest, dated from the town where he landed. His brother, he said, was detained in London by business, and had written to him to join him there ;

he would write again as soon as he reached his destination. It was a long {time before the second letter came, and I copy it verbatim :—

“Dearest Gertrude,—I thought never to write to you again, but to let you believe me rich, thriving, and ungrateful, so that you might pluck me from your heart, and be happy with some one who, if he could not love you as I love you, might at least make you more prosperous. But when I considered how long and anxiously you would watch for letters—that you might deem me sick, perhaps dead, in a strange land—how your loving heart would grieve and be tried by suspense—I thought it better you should know the whole truth. I wrote you that at Hull, instead of the brother I so longed to see, I found only a letter giving me directions to come to London. This was cheerless enough to a stranger not knowing the language, but fortunately for me an English Jew, who spoke German, had come over in the same vessel with me, and on shipboard we had made acquaintance. I had told him the history of my lost arm, and he had deeply sympathized with my misfortune. This gentleman, when he found I was going on to London, said to me, ‘My dear Mr. Bernhard, I feel so sincere a friendship for you that I should be glad to know, since you are a stranger in England, what are your views in London, as perhaps it may be in my power to forward them. Believe me, no idle curiosity induces me to ask these questions, but a sincere wish for your welfare.’ I believed him, and told him my brother’s name and residence, with his

proposal to me. My new friend looked grave when I had told him. He was silent a moment in thought, then he spoke again. 'Ernest Bernhard,' he said, 'I am not a man given to make speeches, but I do earnestly adjure you, should you find aught to displease you under your brother's roof, or to make you wish yourself in another home, come instantly to me; I will be your friend. There is my card, and when you look at it, remember you are not quite a stranger in London.' My journey passed without incident. When I arrived at my brother's, a servant, on hearing my name, ushered me into a splendid apartment, and telling me something I could not understand, left me alone. The clock on the mantel-piece told me I had waited ten minutes, though to my anxious expectation it appeared hours, when a tall, handsome man entered the room, and coming up to me, said, 'My dear Ernest, I am sorry I made you wait, but I was engaged professionally.' In answer, I embraced him, and kissed him after our German fashion. He smiled and said, 'You must leave that off; you would be laughed at, here in London.' This was his greeting after a separation of ten years. A few hurried inquiries after our grandparents, then my brother said, 'Ernest, I have something to tell you before I introduce you to my wife and family. You must know that I am married to a Christian lady, a wealthy and lovely woman. Her sister is at present on a visit to us, and I would not for the world she should guess that we are Jews. I would not write this to you because I would not

wound the prejudices of our grandfather, but of course, my dear brother, you will have no scruples.' Gertrude, never, not even when I heard the sentence that doomed me a cripple for life, did I endure such a shock as I felt at that moment when my brother asked me thus coolly to renounce the faith in which I had been brought up, the religion which has been my solace through all my sufferings. For many minutes I could not speak. My brother ascribed my paleness to another cause. 'You have come a long journey, you are faint,' he said; 'I will ring for refreshments.' I stayed his hand as he was about to touch the bell. 'No, no,' I said, 'it is not that. I will neither eat nor drink in your house. Brother, farewell, your path and mine are widely different. I have come a long journey expecting to find us united in faith as in blood; since it is otherwise, we will part for ever. May God forgive you the cruel wrong you have done me in misleading me hither with a false hope.' My hand was on the handle of the door, when my brother stopped me. 'Ernest,' he exclaimed, 'this is sheer madness; a stranger in London, not even acquainted with the language, whither can you go, so utterly friendless. 'You mistake,' I answered, 'I have a friend, one who will never forsake those who trust in Him.' 'Obstinate fool,' muttered my brother between his closed teeth; but without heeding him, I opened the door, and was soon in the street. When I stood without, such a chain of painful thoughts rushed through my mind that I became giddy, and should have fallen had

not some one supported me. I could not reply to this person's enquiries, but I showed him the card Mr. Colman, my English friend, had given me. I was placed in a cab by the good-natured stranger, and driven to the entrance of a handsome dwelling. My friend had seen me from the window, and he hastened to welcome me. 'It is as I expected, my young friend,' he said, as he shook me warmly by the hand; 'your brother has long forsaken all communion with those of his own faith. Believing from what I have seen of you that you are a sincere Israelite, I thought his roof would be no shelter for you. Now,' he continued kindly, 'you must remain with me until you have determined on your future course. Nay, no thanks,' he continued, as I strove to speak, 'are not all Jews brothers.' He then led me to the room where his wife and children were assembled. He spoke to them a few words in English, when they all rose and warmly greeted me. I am still with Mr. Colman, my Gertrude. I instruct his children in German, and he has procured me a few other pupils, but they pay little to an unknown teacher, and I fear all I can get will not prevent me from becoming a burden on others. Why then shall I suffer you to wear out your young life on fruitless expectations. I do not say forgot me, Gertrude, but I must say in justice to you, remember me only as a loving brother. Tell my beloved grandfather to remember me in his prayers, and to believe that, whatever I may suffer, I will never forsake the religion he taught me."

When I had finished perusing this letter, my grandfather took my hand. "Fear not, droop not, my Gertrude," he said, "the righteous will not be forsaken." On the morrow I answered my cousin's letter. "Come back to us, Ernest," I wrote, "we will find the means here; even here you can win your daily bread amidst those who know and love you, but never speak to me again of wedlock with another. Who could ever supply your place to me as lover, friend, and brother all in one; but fear not, despair not, the time, I feel, will yet come when we shall be repaid for all our trials. Thank your kind friend in our names for what he has done for you, and bid him add to his other favours that of returning you to us. You will receive by the next packet money enough to enable you to be once more with those who love you better than any earthly thing.—Your GERTRUDE, yours only."

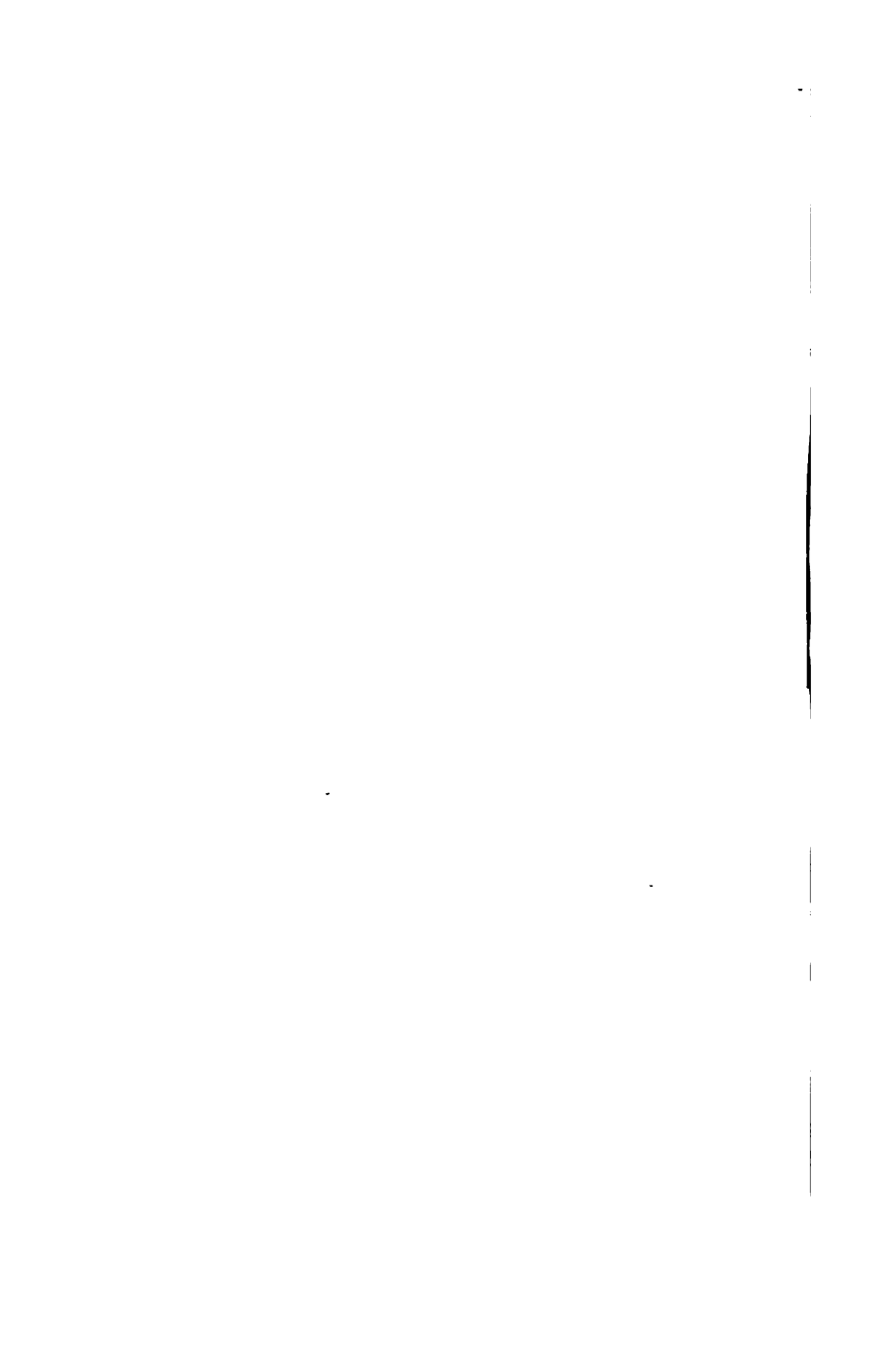
When I had despatched this letter I consulted with my grandfather respecting the disposal of a few jewels left me by my mother. In compliance with my request he took them to a friend of ours, a jeweller, to ascertain their value. After a longer absence than I expected, he returned flushed and excited as I had never before beheld him. "Gertrude," he said, "your lottery ticket, quick." I produced it, and giving one glance at the number, he caught me in his arms, exclaiming, "My child, my child, your ticket has drawn the highest prize." "Almighty God, I thank thee that 'ere I die I shall see my children happy." Need I say how Ernest hastened back to us on receipt of the



joyful news. There were no more tears, no more talk of parting then. When we were married we removed with our grandparents to a pretty house in the suburbs. Years have passed since then ; the green sod covers the graves of our grandparents, but the sounds of youthful voices are heard in our dwelling. The trials of my youth have been repaid tenfold by the tranquil happiness of my latter years. My husband sits beside me, and smiles on me as I write. Of his brother we have never heard. I believe he is still living, but whether in wealth or poverty we know not, and seek not to know.

THE END.

THE  
MARTYRS OF WORMS :  
A GERMAN TALE.



THE

# MARTYRS OF WORMS:

A GERMAN TALE.

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BETWEEN four and five hundred years ago there stood in one of the narrow streets of the Jewish quarter in Worms a large strongly-built house, inhabited by a man named Judah Hallevy, who held the then dangerous pre-eminence of Warden of the Synagogue. Hallevy was a man of great reputed wealth and undoubted probity; benevolent, pious, and intelligent, and esteemed by all his brethren. In happier times for his people he was precisely the man to have gained honourable distinction. But among the fanatic and ignorant populace of Worms all his good qualities availed nothing to shield him from the universal hatred and contempt under which his brethren suffered.

According to the custom of his people, Judah had wedded early, but within the first year his wife died,

after giving birth to a son. The parents of the lost one took charge of the motherless babe, and when, after the lapse of a few years, they went to reside in Palestine, the child accompanied them. In course of time Hallevy wedded again, and his second wife was a widow with one daughter, who, with a brother and sister, the offspring of the second marriage, resided under the roof of her stepfather.

In a small dark room in the house of Hallevy, the furniture of which was scant and mean, sat two persons, on the day our narrative commences. One of them was a young man of three or four and twenty. His figure was slight, and his pale, delicate features, blue eyes, and flaxen hair, at once marked him as not of the Hebrew race. His countenance had been handsome, but the wearing effects of early and constant dissipation were distinctly marked on it. He was well but plainly dressed, and unarmed, with the exception of the jewel-hilted dagger in his belt; yet so marked were the distinctions of rank in that age that no one would have hesitated to pronounce him of noble birth. His companion was in every respect dissimilar. Without the flowing robes of Eastern fashion, the high conical cap and badge on the breast, any beholder would have recognised him as one of the noblest specimens of the Hebrew. His figure was stately, and his stature above the middle height; but alas! he was of a despised and degraded nation, and although yet in the prime and vigour of life, the bowed head and stooping body of him who stood before the haughty

noble showed a consciousness of humiliation and self-debasement. The Count, for such was the rank of Hallevy's visitor, was the first to break silence. "So you think to deceive me with the pretence of poverty," he said, casting a contemptuous glance around the miserable room in which they were seated, "but do not I know that all your tribe lie, cozen, and cheat—that they fatten upon the usury they wring from thoughtless spendthrifts like myself? And do I not also know that you, Judah Hallevy, are the richest amongst these vampyres, and yet you pretend, forsooth, that you cannot afford to lend me a paltry thousand crowns. Go to, thou art a liar, like all thine accursed race."

An angry reply rose to the lips of Hallevy, but he remembered that he was a Jew, and consequently had no right to resent insult; therefore, checking himself, he replied calmly, "You forget, noble Count, that during the whole of the past year you continually borrowed large sums of me, which you promised speedily to repay, but up to the present time I have received nothing; and when did promises satisfy your princes and magistrates if they wished to wring money from a Jew?"

"Well," replied the Count Elric, scornfully, "for what other purpose think you they consent to breathe the same air, or to dwell in the same city polluted by your presence? Were it not that ye possess a faculty for accumulating gold unknown to others, think ye that

the nobles and princes of the land would not long since have utterly extirpated you?"

"Israel has a mightier Protector than king or noble," answered Hallevy, forgetting for an instant all prudential considerations, while his eye flashed, and his stately form was erect as he added reverently, "The Lord of Hosts is His name."

"Miserable Jew," laughed the Count, "thinkest thou indeed that thy blaspheming race is under the protection of Heaven?"

"That belief is part of the heritage I received from my forefathers," said Hallevy; then remembering that he might be provoked into discussion which would lead to dangerous results, he added, "In what can I serve you, my lord?"

"In naught save in granting the loan I have asked thee," answered the Count, sullenly.

"Which loan I grieve it is not in thy servant's power to grant," was the reply. "Can I do aught beside to serve you?"

"No," said the Count, abruptly, as he strode haughtily to the door; "but, Jew, thou mayest ere long repent having disobliged Eric Eberhard."

With the last words he turned, and fixed his blue eyes on Jakob with such an expression of wrath and hate as to make him, though not a coward, turn sick with undefined dread: but before he had time to utter a deprecatory word the Count was gone.

For a few minutes after the departure of the Count, Hallevy stood wrapt in painful thoughts, and then

exclaimed, "The foolish spendthrift must think I coin money to support his extravagance." He advanced to the farther end of the little room, and turning a spring, a portion of the oak panelling opened noiselessly. Within was a door close to the wainscoating to prevent its giving a hollow sound when struck. Passing into a long dark passage, Hallevy took a lamp that was burning in a recess, and proceeded onward until he reached what appeared a solid wall; he paused, removed a stone fitted with such exactness as to defy scrutiny, and fixing it again on the other side, entered a second passage, and descending a flight of broad stone steps, stopped at the open door of a large apartment, through which a soft light was diffused from a seven-branched lamp that hung suspended from the ceiling. The room was richly furnished, and looked like a fairy palace by the light of the lamp. A middle-aged but still beautiful woman was reading by a table, but at the sound of the Hebrew's step she rose to greet him. Hallevy's wife wore the dress of the East, for so great was the cruelty the Jews at that time endured from the Christians of Europe, that they neither adopted the dress nor the manners of their oppressors. According to the fashion of Jewish matrons, her hair was entirely concealed beneath her turban, and this gave an older appearance to her countenance than it would otherwise have worn.

Subterranean abodes, such as Hallevy and his family then inhabited, were common among the Jews of that period, and, I have been told, are still common



among the concealed Jews of Spain. Exposed at any moment to the violence of a fanatic mob, whose passions, easily excited, were never quenched save in the blood of the defenceless, and receiving only nominal protection from the princes and nobles, as Count Elric had said, on account of their wealth, whenever any of these latter wished to propitiate their people, the Jews were the parties to be sacrificed as alike hateful to all.

In the free cities of Germany especially this was often the case. The inhabitants, just emerging from the state of feudal slaves, had begun to discover some of the advantages to be derived from commerce. The nobles and clergy, although still holding aloof from the trading communities, and scorning every profession but those of arms and religion as unsuited to gentle blood, were yet glad to receive the gold of the burghers in return for privileges and protection afforded them. To these trading communities the Jews—active, intelligent and industrious—were formidable opponents. The common tie of religion that bound them together, and enabled them to know all that was passing throughout the civilised world, also conferred on them immense advantages, and thus they were more obnoxious to the burghers than even to the clergy and nobility. It was no uncommon thing for this hapless race to seek protection in the palaces of the bishops from the outrages of the people. In the free cities then the Jews were forced to avoid any outward display of wealth.

Thus the underground dwellings became at once

places of refuge and safe depositories of the riches and splendour, a taste for which they derived from their Eastern origin.

But to return to Hallevy and his wife. Judith had noted, on her husband's entrance, that his cheeks were flushed, and he appeared greatly excited, and she inquired anxiously if anything unpleasant had occurred to him. In a few words Hallevy related his interview with Count Elric, and its results.

"And you fear this man, Hallevy?" demanded his wife, sadly.

"I do, for, alas! I am like a man who has made his dwelling near a volcano, and knows not at what hours its fires may burst forth, and destroy his dearest treasures. But where are our children, wife?" he added, "why are they not with thee?"

"The fair commenced to-day," replied Judith, "and Aaron and Esther wished to purchase some trifles therein. Zillah accompanied them, for I feared to trust them without her, as I know her prudence and judgment may be relied upon.

"I would they were returned," said Hallevy, gravely; then seeing his wife's look of alarm, he added, "yet why should I fear? All has gone on quietly of late; no doubt they will come back in safety."

## CHAPTER II.

COUNT ELRIC left the abode of the Jew with every bad passion of his heart fully aroused, and determined on vengeance.

An orphan from boyhood, he had been suffered by his guardians to grow up in unlimited indulgence of his passions. A feudal lord, possessing powers of life and death on his own estate, his will had been unquestioned. Literature at that time formed no part of a young noble's education; for although printing had now been for some time introduced, books were yet rare, and read by few, save men whose profession rendered study necessary. Consequently, when not engaged in a career of arms, gaming was the usual resource of men who found the time hang heavily on their hands, from want of better employment. Elric, following the example of his young compeers, became early a gamester. While yet a minor, the Count had wedded the daughter of his guardian, a beautiful but haughty and pleasure-loving woman. The wealth of the Count was soon expended, and he became a borrower, until, as we have seen, a bankrupt even in credit.

Then, instead of blaming his own evil course, he

determined to wreak his disappointment on his unfortunate creditor.

"What is to be done," muttered the Count to himself as he strode along the busy streets, "from Hallevy nothing is to be extorted. Three days hence the grand tournament comes off at Elsheim. Adelaide is named Queen of Beauty, and I have promised to run a tilt with Maurice of Elsheim. I have neither horse nor arms in which I can appear, and I promised my wife to redeem her jewels from this cursed Jew, but his obstinacy could neither be overcome by threats nor promises. By my knighthood, I would rather face a score of men-at-arms than brave my fair dame's reproaches, when she hears the ill success of my mission." While thus soliloquizing the Count had quitted the Jewry, and turned into one of the principal streets of the town. It was a fair day, and booths were erected, in which the most tempting wares were displayed; sparkling jewels and splendid suits of armour arrested Elric's attention at every step, and excited still more forcibly the painful reflections on his poverty which had previously occupied him.

He had stopped before a booth richly ornamented with foreign stuffs, when his attention was suddenly attracted by the sound of a woman's voice speaking in a slightly foreign accent, but so soft and musical were the tones that he involuntarily turned towards the speaker. Two females and a young lad were standing in front of the booth. The boy's dress and features at once proclaimed his nation, but the women were

plainly habited, and looked like daughters of a substantial citizen, save that they wore long thick veils. The veil of the one that had spoken was raised, so that the Count was able to obtain a good view of her countenance, and never before had he seen one so lovely. How tame did the fair skin, blue eyes and flaxen hair of his Adelaide appear when compared with the rich olive tint, the speaking eyes, the jetty hair and dimpled cheek of the bright daughter of the East, and when the maiden, abashed by the gaze of the stranger, suddenly drew down her veil, Elric dashed it aside, and seizing the terrified Jewess in his arms, attempted to kiss her ruby lips ; but scarcely was the outrage perpetrated, when the boy, aroused by his sister's shrieks and struggles to free herself, struck the Count such a violent blow on the face that he let go his hold, and staggered backward nearly senseless from pain. In a moment, however, he recovered himself, and seizing the boy, who with his sisters was attempting to escape from the crowds which had already gathered, exclaimed, " The dog, the vile Jew, has dared to strike a noble of the empire. By every saint in heaven his blood alone, spilt drop by drop, shall atone for his deed."

" Fly, sister, fly," shouted the brave boy, regardless of Elric's threats, " fear not for me," but the one who had not yet spoken threw herself on her knees, exclaiming,

" Oh ! my lord, have mercy ; he is but a child—he knows not what he has done."

"A child, forsooth," said the Count, scornfully; "methinks for one of his tender years his blows fall right heavily."

"Nay, my lord, he is but a boy, and knew not that he committed wrong in protecting his sister."

"Remove thy veil that I may look upon thy face," answered Elric, "I love not replying to veiled pleaders."

With a trembling hand the Hebrew cast aside her veil, and displayed to view features less bright and sparkling than her sister's, but bearing the impress of a lofty mind in every line, while her movements, even in that moment of anguish, showed her a true descendant of Judah's stately maidens. But Count Elric, even in his better moods, was not a being to appreciate the intellectual loveliness displayed in the countenance of the Jewess, and chafed and angered as he had been that morning, there was no chance of his foregoing his vengeance on one of Hallevy's tribe for a woman's pleading, though he little knew how complete was the revenge fortune had afforded him. "Rise," he said sullenly, "thy entreaties are vain."

While the events of which we have just spoken had taken place, some of the Count's armed retainers had joined him, and to these he had committed the charge of the young Jew, and turning from the suppliant at his feet, he now gave orders, in a low voice, that they should bear their captive to his castle of Eberhard, six miles distant from Worms.

"Forbear, forbear yet a little while," said the

maiden whose sweet voice had first attracted the attention of the Count. "Let my father, Judah Hallevy, be summoned. He is wealthy, he will perchance prevail on thee to spare his child."

"Judah Hallevy thy father," exclaimed the Count exultingly; "ha, ha! fortune has indeed been propitious beyond my hopes. Come, maiden, thou shalt accompany thy brother, and a noble ransom," he added to himself, "shall the Jew pay for his children." So saying, he laid his lawless hand on the trembling girl. She uttered a piercing shriek for aid, and her sister flew to her side, and attempted to undo the clasp of the Count, who laughed scornfully at her fruitless efforts. What, however, of her own strength she could not have accomplished, was effected by the aid of others. Two young men, who had joined the crowd at the beginning of the fray, but had hitherto remained silent but observant spectators, now suddenly rushed through the throng of people, dashed the Count's arm aside, and seizing each a maiden in his vigorous arm, pushed past the surprised bystanders, and 'ere any one had presence of mind enough to pursue, were lost to sight in one of the dark openings that branched off from the principal street. Satisfied of the fruitlessness of any search after the fugitives, the Count, muttering curses on the rescued and rescuers, secured his remaining prisoner, and set out with a lighter heart for Eberhard, secure in the gratification of his avarice and revenge.

### CHAPTER III.

LONG and anxiously did Hallevy and his wife await the return of their children. They had gone back to the upper part of the house, and every sound, every step in the street, made their hearts beat violently, and Judith had requested her husband to go forth in search of them, when a loud and hurried knocking at the house door increased their alarm, which was, however, for the moment dissipated by the entrance of Zillah and Esther, with their protectors. Esther threw herself into her mother's arms, and hiding her face in her bosom, wept bitterly, while Zillah, more calm and collected, from a habit of controlling her feelings, related to her father the misfortune that had befallen her brother, and their own delivery from the same danger by the two strangers who had accompanied them, and who she had learned were Hebrews, but lately arrived in Worms.

For a minute or two, Hallevy stood stunned by the intelligence of the heavy calamity which had so suddenly overwhelmed him. At length he advanced to the strangers, and "gratefully thanking" them for their opportune aid, begged them earnestly to remain under his roof during the remainder of their stay in Worms. "You owe us no gratitude," said the elder of the



strangers, "we look upon Jews, throughout the world, as our brethren, and as sisters we have rescued your fair daughters from outrage. We thank you for your hospitable offer," he continued, "but fear in your present sorrow we should be but intruders upon you."

But of a refusal Hallevy would not hear. "Ye are my brethren," he said, "and as such shalt not quit my roof; and you, dearest," he added, turning to his weeping wife, "let not sorrow blind you to the duties of hospitality. Our boy's life is in no danger; the Count's need is greater than his cruelty, and although it is hard to be robbed of the fruits of many years' toil, still gold is better lost than life. But do thou, in case of danger, go with our children and guests to the hidden chambers. I will to the Count Elric at Eberhard." Then bidding farewell to his wife, children and guests, Judah Hallevy set out for the abode of the Count, whither we shall follow him.

Night had fallen when Hallevy reached the castle of Eberhard, a gloomy feudal fortress, standing on the bank of the Rhine, close to the shore. It was not till after much delay that Hallevy gained admittance to the hall of this building, and then he was obliged to remain amid the gibes and scorn of the brutal retainers of Count Elric, till it pleased that haughty noble to admit him to his presence. As the time passed heavily on, Hallevy began to entertain doubts of the prudence of the step he had taken, in putting his own person, as well as his child's, into the power of the Lord of Eberhard. Then he thought, too, of the anxious

watchers in his sad home, when, just as his feelings were excited to the utmost, he received a summons to the Count:

The Lord of Eberhard and his lady sat on a platform, on a seat slightly raised. Both were richly dressed, and surrounded by attendants, who, at a motion from the Count, removed out of earshot, as the Jew advanced to within a little distance of where he and the lady sat.

"Well, Jew," said the Count, sternly, as Hallevy humbly saluted him, "what seek ye at the castle of Eberhard?"

With difficulty mastering his emotion, so as to speak calmly, Hallevy replied,

"My son, a mere boy, has, I have been told, offended my lord in a tumult to-day, and behaved insolently, for which offence he is at present in your dwelling, and I came, noble Count, to entreat that thou wouldst pardon the child."

"Ha, ha!" laughed the Count; "so thou thinkest a dog of a Jew is to raise his hand against a noble of the empire, and then, forsooth, because another of his vile race, his father, asks it, he is to win pardon as easily as if he had spurned a beggar's brat. Jew," continued the Count, vehemently, "dost thou remember our conversation of this morning, and what I then told thee?"

"I do, noble Count, and I am now ready to grant the loan I then denied, so thou wilt give me the boy's liberty."

"Nay," said the Count, "his life, Jew, his life I want; for, by the graves of my ancestors! he dies a death of lingering torture, unless it suit my purpose better to ransom him; and thinkest thou I am such a fool as, for a paltry loan of three thousand crowns, to give up the hold I have over thee? But I will tell thee what I will do," he added, after a pause; "I will drive a Jew-like bargain with thee. Thy son's life against ten thousand crowns of gold and the jewels of Lady Adelaide, now in thy possession; the gems and gold once in my hands, the boy is free; otherwise he starves to death in the dungeons of the castle. Do the terms suit thee?"

"Ten thousand crowns!" echoed Hallevy, sadly; "why, my lord asks a prince's ransom for the son of a poor Jew; but," he continued, "I will give you half the sum you have named, noble Count, with the jewels and bonds I have in my possession; more I have not."

"It were a cheap bargain," said Elric; "those bonds are useless as empty parchments to thee."

"Not so," answered Hallevy, "since the honour of a German noble is pledged to their repayment."

"Honour to a Jew," replied the Count; "and then he added haughtily, "I trifle not; I will prove to thee, Hallevy, that I am in earnest; the ransom, or the boy's life."

"I have it not," groaned Hallevy; "I tell thee, Count Elric, that unless I coin my heart's blood I cannot produce so large a sum."

For answer, the Count stamped with his foot on the floor; a door opened at the farther end of the room, and Aaron Hallevy was dragged into the presence of the noble upon the breath of whose lips, according to human calculations, hung his life. The boy was deadly pale, and his clothes hung about him in tatters. Marks of heavy blows and traces of blood were on his cheeks and forehead, while, as he moved, the clanking of chains smote painfully on his father's ear. Aaron uttered a loud cry when he perceived his father, and sprang towards him; Hallevy caught him in his arms. Elric signed to his men not to interfere, as he knew, with his son in his arms, Hallevy would be less capable of resisting his exactions.

"Hallevy," said Count Elric, when he had suffered some seconds to elapse, "you have the power to decide your son's destiny: starvation in a dungeon, or the ransom I have named."

"Lady, noble lady, plead for us," and Hallevy threw himself at the feet of the Countess, and caught hold of her robe. But with a gesture of abhorrence, as if she would have trodden on a loathsome reptile, the haughty woman tore away her robe from his polluting touch, and deigned no reply. The wretched man rose to his feet, and catching his son once more in his arms, he said, "It is so, if I beggar myself, to-morrow at noon the money and jewels shall be delivered; but grant me at least a few moments' speech with my child 'ere I return to his sorrowing mother."

"Ay," said the Count, "it is thy turn to beg favours now; go into that room," he continued, pointing to an open door that led into a room beyond, "and see that thy conference be brief." Attended by the poor boy, who could scarcely drag his heavy chains after him, Hallevy entered the room and closed the door.

"Would I had died 'ere I had exposed thee to this trouble," said Aaron, in his own beautiful language; "and yet," he continued, his eyes flashing fire at the recollection; "he insulted my sister; he dared to pollute her lips with his unholy kisses; could I stand by and see this?"

"Thy action was natural," answered Hallevy, with a deep sigh; "but alas, my brave boy, thou must learn—nay, the fault is mine, that I taught thee not the lesson earlier. A Jew in this Christian land must have no feelings, no affections; wrong, insult and blows are our portion. We are but suffered to accumulate wealth for these proud Christians to wring from us by torture and suffering. How long, O Lord, how long," he continued, "shall the blood of thy servants be shed?"

The entrance of the Count prevented farther conversation, and straining his soul once more to his heart, Hallevy bade him trust in his father's love, and blessing him fondly and fervently, departed in sadness.

"To-morrow at noon, then," said the Count, as Hallevy bade him good night, "I will bring the boy to Worms, and see that the ransom be prepared."

Anxiously had Judith and her daughters awaited Hallevy's return. They had been joined by Esther's betrothed husband, a wealthy merchant, to whom they had related the unfortunate events of the day. He remained with the watchers, whose fears had become almost insupportable, when hour after hour passed, and Hallevy returned not. Night passed and morning came, and when at last Hallevy's step sounded on the stairs, every one flew to meet him; but who can describe the mother's feelings when she found he was alone? Hallevy had been detained all night at the city gates, which he found closed on his return from Eberhard, and, overcome by fatigue and anxiety, he threw himself into the nearest seat, and covering his face with his hands, wept bitterly, and with such agony as alone can wring tears from the strong heart of man.

"He is dead, my child is murdered!" cried Judith; "Judah, husband, speak to me! my boy, oh my boy!"

"Our child lives, he is safe," replied Hallevy, and in a few words he related his interview with the Count, and its results.

"Bless thee, my Judah, bless thee," said his wife, earnestly; "our child's life is indeed more precious than gold, yet it is much that this greedy noble demands.

"It is indeed a heavy sum," replied Hallevy, "and although I have promised, I know not where to find half the money. My wealth, as you know, is scattered

abroad in various ventures, and this sum must be paid to-day at noon."

"Father," cried Zillah, coming forward and speaking in a tone of impassioned earnestness, and with an emotion she rarely suffered to appear, "thou hast carefully treasured for my use the wreck which thou didst save from my deceased father's property; it amounts, as thou knowest, to half the ransom: take it for my brother."

"And as for me," said Esther, "on my account did my brother incur this danger; therefore, take for his rescue the sum thou hast purposed for my dowry; and if Phineas loves me not well enough to take a portionless bride, I will remain for ever unwedded."

"He does love thee, my Esther, a thousand times better for thy affection to thy kindred;" and leading the blushing girl forward, he added, "Hallevy, give me thy child, and let the gold be paid for the brother who incurred for her so much."

"Bless you both; my children," exclaimed Hallevy, fervently, "I accept your generous offer. But for thee, my Zillah, God forbid I should wrong the orphan. Why should I despoil thee to spare my own property? I would rather sell all I possess than take one coin from thee."

Zillah threw herself into Hallevy's arms, and wept. "Am I not also thy child?" she said. "When the cruel people of Frankfort slew my father, didst thou not protect my mother and myself from their murderous fury? and when I called for my father, didst thou

not say, 'I will be thy father, poor orphan?' and since that day have I not been as a child to thee? have not I looked upon thee with the love and reverence I should have paid to the dead?"

"Thou hast, my Zillah! my beloved!" replied Hallevy, moved by the emotion of one whose feelings were usually so controlled by her judgment as to make her appear cold and wanting in affection to a common observer. "And since my refusal has pained thee, thou and Esther shall lend me sufficient to redeem thy brother; but, with the blessing of Heaven, both shall be repaid."

The two strangers had not been unmoved by this scene. The elder one had more than once brushed the tears from his eyes, which were riveted on Zillah's beautiful and impassioned countenance with an expression full of admiration.



## CHAPTER IV.

AARON HALLEVY returned to his father's dwelling, but terror and suffering had produced a violent fever. Moses, the elder of the strangers, who were cousins, was a skilful physician, having studied under some of the most distinguished men of the East, and he attended young Hallevy with unwearied care. In this task he was ably assisted by Zillah, who, like most of her countrywomen at that time, possessed some knowledge of medicine, and thus they were thrown much into each other's society. Esther and her mother were busied in preparations for the nuptials of the former, which were to be celebrated as soon as Aaron was sufficiently recovered to take part in the festival.

Enthusiastic on one subject only, that of religion, Zillah listened with delight to the eloquent discourse of the young physician, on whom, as well as his cousin Joshua, who rarely quitted his side, the very spirit of the Maccabees seemed to have descended. Brought up, as Mores told Zillah, by an aged relative, the grandparent to both, he and his cousin had become inheritors of great wealth, and had thus escaped the contamination of the evil passions aroused in their co-religionists by the incessant demand on them for the produce of their bitter toil. They had not learned to

become usurers, to lie and cheat in self-defence, through lending to men who considered themselves bound by neither honour nor honesty to repay them. But they had visited many lands with their departed relative, who ended his life at last in the Holy City, then a scene of conflict between Christian and Mussulman, and not a foot of which was possessed by the rightful owners, whose claims both laughed to scorn. North, south, east, and west had they wandered; but everywhere they had seen wrong and oppression the heritage of their people. Thus the minds of the cousins became saddened, while they clung with yet deeper love to the religion for which their people suffered, and of the truth of which they were living witnesses.

The family of Hallevey was one evening assembled together when the conversation turned upon the sufferings of the Israelites. Hallevey had been reading some of the touching records of Israel's martyrs. "Are men like these yet to be found amongst us?" asked Zillah, when Hallevey, overcome by emotion, laid down the book.

"Aye, beautiful Zillah," replied Moses, in answer to her inquiry; "and here is one," he continued, laying his hand on his heart, "who is at any moment ready to lay down his life for his people and his faith."

"And I also," said Joshua, catching his cousin's fire, "am willing to follow thee to death in such a cause."

"I trust," said Hallevey, with a sigh, "that ye may both live to bless our people by the example of virtuous

lives. I have a son," he continued, turning to Moses, "of your age. How happy will he make his father if he resemble thee."

"Is he not with thee?" asked the young man, in a voice slightly trembling as he spoke.

"Alas, no!" replied Hallevy, "he dwells with his grandsire at Jerusalem. As ye say ye have been in the Holy Land of late," he continued, "perhaps ye knew Joseph David."

"I knew him," answered the young man, sorrowfully, "peace to his soul; he departed this life near six months since, leaving his wealth to the orphan grandchildren who dwelt with him, and it was said at Jerusalem that thy son was about to depart for the abode of his father in Germany."

"It may be so," said Hallevy, who had offered up a brief prayer on hearing of the death of his aged friend. "I wrote to him on hearing that his grandsire was dying, that in the event of his death he should return to my house, as, since his infancy, I never beheld my first-born, and I long to bless him 'ere I die."

Overcome by his feelings, Hallevy rose and quitted the room. His wife and children followed in a few moments, and Zillah was left alone with the strangers. Joshua had commenced writing busily, while Moses appeared lost in thought, when Zillah, as if inspired by a sudden resolution, left her seat and came to his side. "You are acquainted with David Hallevy," she said, raising her eyes to his face; "you are but lately

returned from Jerusalem, and you have been a wanderer in many lands. David also travelled with his grandfather for many years, to gain wisdom and relieve his suffering brethren. His letters breathe the same spirit as your words tell : am I mistaken in giving you the dear name of brother ?”

“ No ; call me not brother, fairest Zillah,” he replied ; from thee I would fain claim a dearer name, for in thee do I behold the embodiment of all I have ever dreamed of Judah’s maids, in happier times. And wilt thou refuse,” he continued, in a faltering voice, seeing she was still silent, “ the heart I proffer thee, unworthy as it is of thine ?”

“ Answer me one question,” she said, blushing as she spoke, “ and then, with thy father’s consent, I will be thy wife. Why hast thou practised deception and entered as a stranger a dwelling into which thou wouldst have been joyfully received as a child ?”

“ Blame me not, dearest Zillah,” replied the young man, eagerly ; thou shalt have my reasons for what I have done, and then, if it be thy wish, I will at once throw myself at my father’s feet, remove the deception, and claim a blessing and thy hand together. My mother, as thou knowest, died in the hour of my birth, and my father, who tenderly loved her, could not bear to look upon the child who had cost him so dear. Buried in grief, he asked not of my welfare, but my grandsire took the deserted babe, and loved it as his own. It was long ’ere my father could master his resolution sufficiently to see his child, and then the

sight of me threw him into such an agony of grief that his visit was never renewed. My grandfather soon after removed to Jerusalem, and in the course of time my father married again. He then wrote to ask my return home ; but my grandfather would not consent that I should leave him. My intercourse with my only parent was carried on by letter. Thus, estranged from my nearest relatives, I grew into manhood. I knew that I had a brother and sister, and, oh, Zillah, how my heart yearned to look upon them. But I would not leave the aged man who loved me so well. When at length his pure spirit departed to a happier world, I converted my portion of his bequest into gold, and determined to return to my father's house. But how would he receive me ? perhaps as a stranger. I remembered too well our first interview not to shudder at the idea of its repetition. My brother and sister, too, they might look upon me, perchance, as an intruder. I took counsel with my cousin, who would not leave me, and at length we agreed to make ourselves acquainted with my family as strangers, and win their affections 'ere I declared myself, so that my father might bestow his love before he knew that he gave it but as a right to one whose claim upon it he had been so long in admitting. Thus when accident introduced me to my long-estranged relatives, I gladly availed myself of the opportunity thus offered, and fain would I retain my disguise a little longer, that I may bind my father's heart closer to me 'ere I say,

'Behold thy first-born stands before thee, withdraw not thy love from him.'

"As thou wilt," answered Zillah, as she suffered her lover to seat her by his side, and murmur sweet dreams of the future in her listening ear. What a blessing that a merciful Creator suffers not the present to be saddened by a knowledge of the future. Poor Zillah! the remembrance of that hour was a green spot in her after life.

## CHAPTER V.

It was the morning of Esther's bridal, and the two sisters sat together with their mother in the room where Esther had passed her infancy and girlhood.

Esther's life had hitherto been a happy one, shadowed only by one passing cloud, that of her brother's danger. She had one arm round her sister's waist, and the other rested on her mother's shoulder, while her loving eyes turned alternately to the face of each, and tears of mingled joy and sorrow streamed unheeded down her cheeks. She was dressed in her bridal attire, and the lace of her cap made her face look yet paler. Before her, on the table, lay the thick black tresses recently severed from her head (according to the Jewish custom), but it was not of them she thought. She was weeping for the dear home she was about to leave, the tender parents, the loved companions of her childhood. Their tried affection she was about to exchange for the still untried love of one who, much as she valued him, might yet give her cause to repent her trusting faith. A summons to the bridal party interrupted the current of these sad reflections, and, after some delay, wrapped in her bridal veil, and led by her mother and sister, the weeping Esther entered the room where the guests

were assembled. But no father, no bridegroom, advanced to meet the bride. Confusion seemed to reign throughout the room. White cheeks and white lips met her gaze wherever she turned her eyes. The nuptial canopy was erected, and the Rabbi stood by ready to perform the ceremony; but he too looked dismayed and pale. Esther clung half fainting to her mother's arm, while the Rabbi, pitying her suffering, said soothingly, "Thy father and bridegroom will soon return; they have been summoned before the Burgomaster on account of some tumult which has just occurred in the street."

A dead silence fell upon the group after this explanation. Esther was again seated between her mother and sister, the veil hid her face so that no one could read its expression, but the heaving of her chest, and rise and fall of her shoulders, told she was weeping. Zillah kept her sister's hand clasped in hers. Though outwardly calm, she felt inwardly as much alarmed as Esther; for she well knew that whenever the chief Jews were summoned before the Burgomaster, it was a sure indication of fresh oppressions and extortions.

At length came the tread of hurrying feet. Hallevy and his guests had returned, but oh, how different they looked. Instead of a bridal party, they appeared like mourners at a funeral. Hallevy spoke in a low voice to the Rabbi. The bride was brought forward, and solemnly and sadly was the ceremony gone through. Esther was a wife; her husband's kiss was on her lips; he was safe and well; but the alarm and



agitation had been too much for her, and she was borne fainting from the room. The magnificent banquet which had been prepared was almost untouched, and it was a relief to the family when the guests departed and they were left alone. Esther and her husband remained by Hallevy's desire in his house. Care and anxiety were written that day on the brow of Hallevy ; and he had cause for alarm. While his daughter was preparing to take upon her the solemn duties of a wife, he and many of his guests were, as we have seen, summoned before the magistrates of Worms. But that the reader may better understand what passed, it will be necessary to recur to the bridal morning. Just after the Rabbi and his attendants had entered Hallevy's dwelling, the inhabitants of the Jewry were alarmed by furious cries in the neighbourhood. It appeared, on inquiry, that a priest asserted, whether truly or not has never been ascertained, that while carrying the host, in order to administer the sacrament to a sick person, he was attacked by two Jews, who knocked down the host out of his hand, and trampled on it. He added that they had succeeded in making their escape before he could give the alarm ; but when asked to describe their persons, he could give no clue to identify the offenders. This tale was sufficient to arouse the fanatic populace against the Jews, and with loud outcries they demanded that every Hebrew in the city should be given up to their vengeance. The magistrates caused the elders to be summoned, and with difficulty they were saved from being torn to

pieces by the mob. When at length they reached the dwelling of the Burgomaster, every kind of abuse was heaped upon them, and many suffered personal violence. In vain Hallevy, as spokesman, represented that the body of Jews were wholly guiltless of the outrage perpetrated. The command of the Burgomaster was absolute.

"If within eighteen days," he said, "the offenders are not delivered to justice, every one in Worms professing the Jewish faith, man, woman, and child, shall perish, and their property be given to the religious houses in the neighbourhood."

Remonstrance was vain. Every Jew was forbidden to leave the Jewry on any pretence, and the gates were to be kept close. It may be imagined in what frame of mind Hallevy returned to witness his daughter's marriage.

"Is there no hope that the real offenders will come forward to save the innocent?" said the wife of Hallevy, as with ashy lips and cheeks she listened to the fearful history.

"Alas, no," was Hallevy's reply; "for even should this be more than a pretext for our destruction, which I doubt, thinkest thou that men who for their own gratification could thus peril the safety of the innocent will have courage enough to avow the deed? No, no, we must seek help from above, earthly help we have none."

## CHAPTER VI.

HALLEVY was right ; day after day passed in fasting, prayer, and lamentation ; each one looked upon himself and those dear to him as beings whose days were numbered. One person only spoke of hope,—it was David Hallevy, who yet remained as a stranger under his father's roof. "A merciful Creator," he said, "would not suffer so many innocent beings to perish ; deliverance would yet be found for them."

But Hallevy only answered his attempt to arouse him to something like hope, by saying, "You have neither wife nor children. Oh, that my son may keep from Worms at this fearful time," said Hallevy, when, on the seventeenth day, he returned from the Synagogue ; "let this danger pass over, and I will at once quit this land of blood, and seek a safer asylum for my family. But it may not be," he added ; "I shall see them led like lambs to the slaughter, and perchance have to look on and see them die."

A great change had taken place in Hallevy since the day of Esther's bridal. His hair and beard had become white, his form bent, and his eyes hollow ; age had come suddenly upon him.

When Zillah was about to retire that evening, she found David Hallevy waiting in the passage that led to

her chamber. As the light of her lamp fell upon his face, she saw that it was deadly pale, and his hand trembled as he took hers.

"Zillah," he said, in a voice tremulous from emotion, "I have brought a packet to place in thy charge; the direction will tell thee how to act."

He relinquished her hand as she took the packet from him, and then fearing to be questioned, abruptly quitted her.

When Zillah entered the chamber, she found a slip of paper in the string that tied it, directing her, in event of its not being claimed by the owner at sunset on the morrow, to open it. The maiden wept as she placed the packet in a secret drawer, for she thought what terrible scenes that morrow might bring forth. The picture of her own father's murder came vividly before her. She knew that gold in abundance had been offered for the rescue of her people; but blood alone could satisfy the wolfish passions of the populace, and in fancy she saw them already falling around her. She sought refuge in prayer from these fearful pictures, and thus the night passed.

At daybreak, Hallevy summoned his household together in the subterranean chamber. David and his cousin were also present. Again and again Hallevy blessed his wife and children, as one who was about to leave them for ever; for his post was in the Synagogue, and he could not desert it. Judith clung to him in frantic agony, entreating him not to leave her and her children; but he was resolute.

"Here thou art comparatively safe," he said, "and I have promised refuge to many others ; but if I were missing, search would be made, and all, peradventure, might perish."

Then, entwining his wife's arms, he laid her tenderly on a heap of cushions, and called his children one by one to bless them. Esther's husband, who was to remain with his wife, shared his blessing, and he was about to depart when David came forward.

"A good man's blessing is ever to be desired," he said, his voice faltering ; "Judah Hallevy, bless me also, for I love thee as a father, and fain would I have thy prayers this day."

"I would that my blessing might avail indeed," said Hallevy, as he laid his hand on the young man's head ; thou art welcome to it in any event."

One parting look at Zillah, one pressure of her hand, and David Hallevy went forth from his father's house never to return.

The men had assembled once more in the Synagogue. Wailing, weeping, and prayer were heard throughout the building ; but two were there who wept not, and yet none prayed more fervently.

Noonday had arrived, and there came a tread of hurrying feet ; the gates of the Jewry were forced open, and shouts, curses, fearful oaths, and voices that breathed forth death, were heard advancing towards the Synagogue. In a moment it was surrounded, and murderous hands stretched forth to seize the victims,

when a loud voice cried, "Forbear!" Two men stepped forward; they were very pale, but calm.

"Spare the guiltless," they said, as they came in front of the eager mob, "we surrender ourselves to your justice; but let us alone suffer."

A storm of execrations was the reply; and when Hallevy raised his eyes, he saw his late guests borne off by a crowd of demons in human form.

"They are not guilty," he cried; "when the outrage was committed, they were under my roof."

But his voice was unheard amid the confusion. The Christians bore off their victims, and the congregation was saved. All around at once comprehended the noble self-devotion which had preserved them from destruction; but one pang was saved the father's heart,—he knew not that his son was perishing for him. All day the Jews remained in the Synagogue to weep and pray for the innocent sufferers, who died in the midst of fearful tortures, praying for themselves and their people.

## CHAPTER VII.

HALLEVY had despatched a messenger early in the afternoon to his family, bearing the blessed tidings of safety ; but no word of the fearful sacrifice by which that safety was insured. He returned, sick at heart, to his dwelling, at sunset. His wife and children flew to meet him, but he returned not their caresses ; for the sight of the room brought back a remembrance of the morning, and the blessing his guest had craved so earnestly of him. Unable to control his feelings, after the terrible excitement he had undergone, Hallevy sobbed aloud.

“ What has happened, father ? ” asked Zillah, a fearful foreboding intruding on her mind ; “ where are the strangers ? ” she added, her cheeks growing crimson as she spoke.

“ In heaven, I trust,” replied Hallevy, in a voice choked with sobs, “ they died to save us from death.”

A wild shriek from Zillah told her interest in the narrative, and at once opened the eyes of the mother to the state of her child’s heart.

“ Zillah, my child, speak, oh, speak to me,” she cried in her distraction, as she marked the stony look and glassy eye of her daughter. “ Let me but see

thee weep, dearest," she added, as her own eyes streamed with tears.

But Zillah wept not; she never wept again. She was borne to her sleeping chamber, and there she entreated to be left alone. Hallevy, who knew her strength of mind and genuine piety, judged it better to comply with her request. She fastened the door when in solitude, and took from the secret drawer the parcel given to her by her lover on the preceding evening. Eagerly she tore off the cover, and a golden box set with jewels met her eye. It contained a lock of hair and a letter. She sat down, and though her eyeballs burned and her hand shook, she read it steadily. It was as follows:—

"Beloved Zillah,—My own, my betrothed! to thee, whom it has been my sweetest hope to claim as bride, I sit down to write an everlasting farewell on earth. Two months have I now dwelt under the same roof with thee, and each day hast thou become dearer to me; for each day has made me better acquainted with thy virtue. Yet I am about to leave thee. Thou knowest how I have longed to hear my father call me his beloved child; yet that hope I must also forego. Danger threatens him and thee, and thousands of my people. Two lives are required to ransom all. I have thought over this, and spoken of it with my cousin since the first commencement of the danger. Noble, generous, and devoted, the companion of my boyhood has said, 'David, I live or die with thee; thinkest thou that thou only hast resolution to



die for thy faith and thy people ?" I embraced him, for we read each other's hearts, and from that hour we determined, if it be needed, to deliver ourselves up to the butchers of Worms. If we sin in this, may He who readeth all hearts pardon the crime for the sake of the motive.

"For thy sake, my Zillah, we have deferred the execution of our plans until the last moment, for other means may yet arrive ; but if they do not 'ere this meets thine eye, I shall be with the dead. And, oh, that my death alone may suffice, and that he, my more than brother, may be spared. Let not my father know, dearest, that he has to mourn the death of a child ; it will but add to the weight of anguish which has already made him prematurely old. My wealth have I divided between him and thee ; it will be but a trust in thy hands for our distressed brethren. The lock of hair I have just severed from my head, I thought thou wouldst prize it for the sake of him who loves thee so fondly. It is hard to say, farewell to thee, my Zillah ; the thought of what thou wilt suffer is the bitterest drop in my cup of sorrow. But our heavenly Father will give thee strength for the trial.

"May He who guardeth Israel watch over thee and bless thee henceforth and for evermore, and may this be thy last earthly sorrow.

"DAVID HALLEVY."

It was more than an hour after the perusal of this letter that Zillah's mother entered the room. She found her outwardly calm, for after concealing the

precious letter in her bosom, she had passed the interval in prayer; but her feelings were more intense than if she had yielded to outward demonstrations of sorrow. From the moment she heard of her lover's death, no tinge of colour ever rested on her cheeks or lips. She performed her duties steadily and calmly as usual; but it was evident to all that her heart was breaking. Amongst the sick and oppressed of her nation, Zillah was a guardian angel; but the gay and happy never beheld her amongst them.

Days, weeks, and months, Hallevy expected the return of his son, but he died without knowing aught of his history, save that he had quitted Jerusalem for Germany.

Zillah was never wedded. She refused many offers, and remained to close the eyes of her parents:

A day before her own death, she burned the letter she had until then carried in her bosom, and her secret was buried with her.

In the Synagogue at Worms, the memorial lights are still burned in memory of the martyred young men; but Hallevy's memory and Zillah's sorrows are forgotten.

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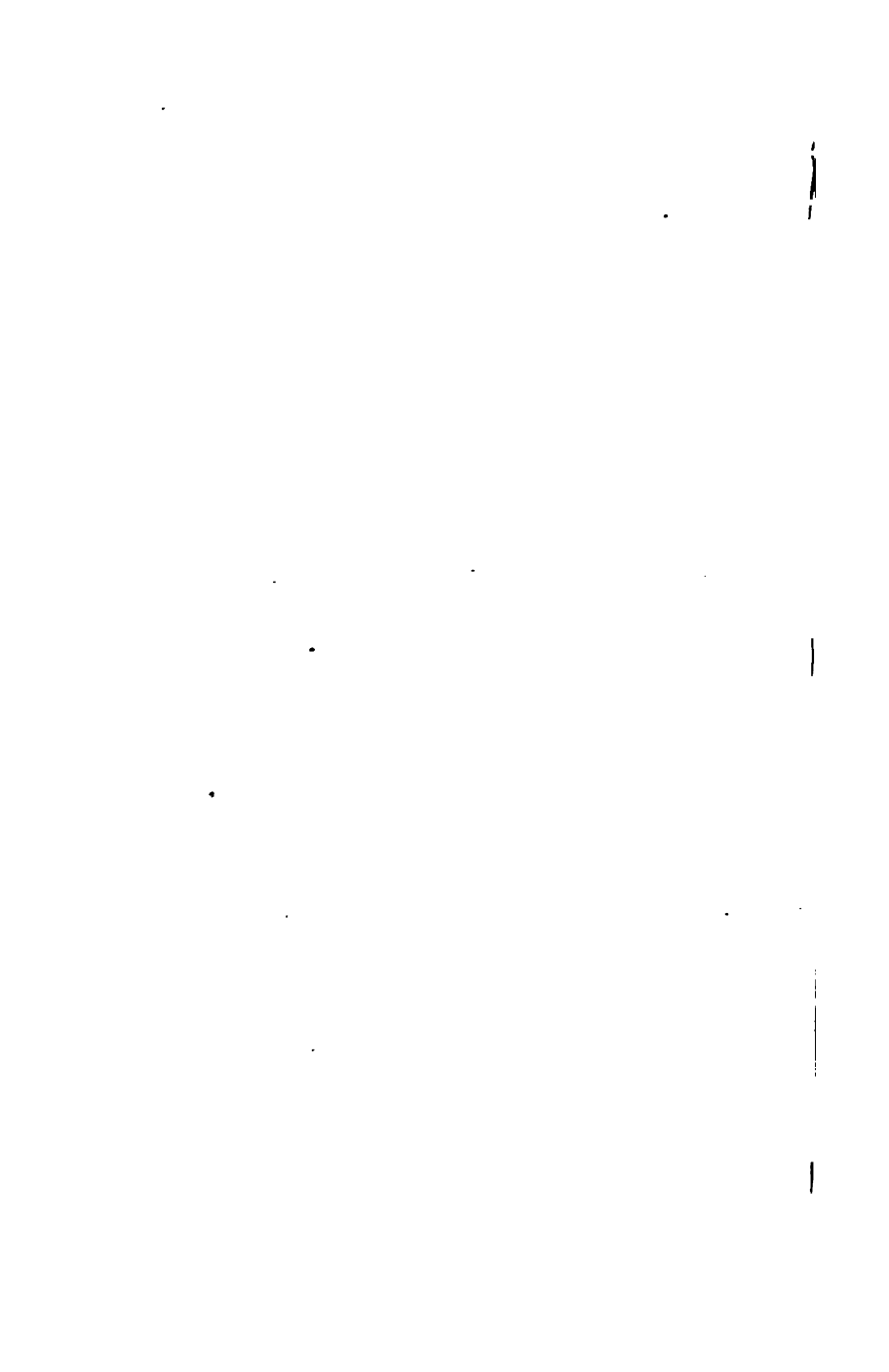
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**N E E L A :**

**A TALE OF THE**

**J E W S I N E N G L A N D .**



# NEELA :

A TALE OF THE

J E W S   I N   E N G L A N D .

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## CHAPTER I.

"AYE, aye, the old story—rapine, cruelty, and oppression! Could not Henry of England find a fitter instrument to execute his arbitrary decrees than old Richard Falkner?" and the knight threw down the king's warrant with a look of contempt which augured little for his loyalty.

The speaker was a blunt soldier, who had spent the greater part of his life in the camp or on the battle field. Full of the prejudices of his age and country, he nevertheless possessed many high and honourable feelings. He had witnessed with indignation the meanness and injustice which characterized the conduct of Henry the Third towards the unfortunate wan-

derers of Israel. Detesting them as a sect, Sir Richard Falkner pitied them as victims ; and his personal knowledge of one of the proscribed race had gone far towards dissipating the rancour engendered by bigotry.

An Israelite had been many years settled in the village of Chesterton, about a mile from Sir Richard's domain ; and, protected by its powerful baron, he had escaped in a great degree the persecutions which had ground his less fortunate brethren to the dust. A skilful physician, Rabbi Ephraim was the friend and benefactor of all who needed his assistance ; and his benevolent character had gained him the name of the good Jew of Chesterton. He had one daughter, the only surviving child of a numerous family ; and the sternest fanatic forgot to curse when he beheld the graceful form of Neela, the Jewess, supporting the feeble steps of her sickly and aged mother. But Rabbi Ephraim was no longer to be spared ; for Sir Richard's exclamation had been called forth by an order from King Henry to demand of the Jew one thousand silver marks before the 1st of November, to which it wanted but two days.

At some distance from the village of Chesterton, and close to the sea, which in stormy weather washed its walls, stood the house of Ephraim ; its plain but massive front looking out upon the expanse of waters, studded here and there with the white sails of some fishing boat, looking like a sea-bird's wing in the distance. At the back of the house was an extensive garden, in which some of the latest flowers of the

season were still blooming, and when Sir Richard arrived on his disagreeable mission, he reined in his horse to admire the beauty and neatness with which it was arranged. He had sat some minutes gazing, when he was startled from his reverie by the re-appearance of the page whom he had sent forward to announce his coming to Ephraim: in answer to his question, the boy informed him that the house was closed, and no living soul was to be seen.

Falkner galloped hastily round to the front entrance and knocked loudly at the door with the hilt of his sword; and after some delay it was opened by an aged female, whose eyes were red and swollen with weeping.

In answer to his request to see the Rabbi, she informed him that Ephraim had been dead three weeks. They had received intelligence only last evening of his death and burial in Italy, whither he had gone to arrange his daughter's nuptials with the father of her affianced husband.

"Peace to his soul!" said the good knight, crossing himself, and forgetting in his sorrow at the tidings that he had breathed a prayer for a heretic. He was about to turn his horse's head homeward, when he was arrested by the sound of what appeared to be a rapidly approaching multitude, whose coming was announced by cries resembling the whoops of savages.

"Down with the murdering Jews! Down with the sorcerers!—remember Hugh of Lincoln!—fire their house!—down with them!" Such were the exclama-



tions of the crowd; and when Sir Richard turned to address the woman, she had already fled, apprehending that this was one of the popular tumults against the unfortunate Israelites, which at that time so often disgraced the people of England. Determined not to abandon the defenceless inmates of the dwelling to the fury of a mob who spared neither sex nor age, Falkner drew his sword, and giving his horse to the page, bade him ride over to the castle for assistance, while he himself remained to protect the family of Ephraim.

Meanwhile the infuriate rabble were within sight, and to his surprise Falkner recognized in the thickest of the throng, and apparently leading them on, Sir Leslie Gower, brother to the Baron of Chesterton. At the sight of Sir Richard; the multitude halted for a moment, and Leslie Gower rode forward to his side.

"Well met, gallant Sir Richard," said he, extending his mailed hand to his brother in arms, "thou art here in good time to assist in punishing the vilest deed that hath ever disgraced the kingdom since Hugh of Lincoln was basely done to death."

"What mean ye?" demanded Falkner: "Why bring ye an armed mob against a house which contains only helpless and sorrowing women?"

"My brother's child—" said Gower, averting his face as if to conceal some powerful emotion.

"What of him?—what of the fair boy? I trust, no evil?"

"He is dead—murdered!" exclaimed Gower,

hoarsely; and for a moment Sir Richard himself looked like a man who had been struck by the blow of an assassin.

“Who hath done this?” said the old man, in an unsteady voice, “Who hath wrung a mother’s heart, and destroyed a father’s hope? Who could raise a hand against that lovely child?”

“Who murdered Hugh of Lincoln?” answered Leslie. “Who hath shed the blood of hundreds of Christian children? Who, but the accursed Jews! Art thou with us, Sir Richard Falkner, in the cry for vengeance?”

“Had my own brother raised his arm against Eugene Gower’s son, I would have sheathed my blade in his heart! But are ye certain ye act not rashly in this business—have ye proof?”

“Unquestionable;—but while we tarry here they may escape. Forward, my men, and death to the Jews!” Again the crowd began to rush forward, filling the air with yells of fury, and forgetting in their excitement all the benefits Ephraim and his child had heaped upon them for years. They only remembered they were of the proscribed race; they only thought of the murder of their master’s son, and they thirsted for vengeance.

Horror-struck as Falkner had been by the news brought to him, he wished to prevent, if possible, the excesses which he knew would follow the entrance of the excited populace, headed as they were by one who had so much cause of hatred, and he hurriedly en-

treated Gower to enter the house with him alone. "We are both armed," he said, "and with such numbers at hand, we can have no cause for fear." Gower smiled disdainfully at the mention of fear; but addressing a few words to his followers, he dismounted, and entered the house with Sir Richard.

There was no sound or sign of human beings in the rooms through which they passed, and neither was in a mood to notice the splendour of their decoration. At length they opened the door of an apartment in which they heard-murmured sounds, as if some one within were praying. The words that reached their ears were in a strange tongue, yet they sounded like words of sorrow. The room was lofty, and richly furnished in the Oriental style. Splendid hangings, rich carpets, mirrors, all that taste or luxury could devise, was there displayed, with a profusion such as England's king could not at that period command. Yet, withal, it bore a desolate aspect. Embroidery work and female ornaments were scattered about, as if death or misfortune had arrested the hand of the fair owner in the midst of her employment. The room had been purposely darkened; and in one corner, standing on the ground, was a silver lamp filled with oil, which shed a dim sepulchral light around. And near it, on low cushions, sat two females, both so much absorbed in their occupation as not to perceive the entrance of the strangers.

The younger lady was reading, in a sweet but solemn tone, a portion of the Hebrew prayers; and

there was something so touching in the expression of her pale but beautiful countenance, and sad resignation of look and attitude, that Sir Richard was moved almost to tears, as he thought of her probable fate. The supposition that so fair and delicate a creature could be a participator in the shedding of blood seemed too monstrous to be entertained. She did not appear to be more than seventeen, and her full rounded figure and sunny complexion betrayed her Eastern origin. There was no tinge of colour on her cheek ; but the ripe red lip contrasted beautifully with her white teeth. Her eyes were of the darkest shade of blue, and their long black lashes gave them a thoughtful and pensive expression. Her hair, of a glossy jet, was thrown carelessly back from her face, and fell in thick tresses almost to her feet ; the pearl chaplet with which she usually bound them lying neglected on a marble table near. Her dress, of violet coloured silk, made in the Oriental style, was without ornament of any kind, and a white embroidered veil, thrown over the back of her head, formed a graceful drapery round her fair shoulders. Still there was an air of negligence in her attire, rich as it was, which showed the heart of the wearer to be too full of sorrow for womanly vanity. The other female still bore traces of the beauty which had distinguished her early years ; but sickness and sorrow had worn her to a shadow, and seemed hurrying her to an untimely grave.

Gower slowly and silently advanced till he stood by the side of the younger female, then laying his hand

treated Gower to enter the house with him alone. "We are both armed," he said, "and with such numbers at hand, we can have no cause for fear." Gower smiled disdainfully at the mention of fear; but addressing a few words to his followers, he dismounted, and entered the house with Sir Richard.

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The younger lady was reading, in a sweet but solemn tone, a portion of the Hebrew prayers; and

for her aged mother stood beside her, gazing anxiously into her face as if she wished to read there the meaning of this intrusion on their solitude. Neela threw her arms around her parent, exclaiming in tones of agony, "Oh, my mother, why hast thou lived to see this day?"

"What meanest thou," my beloved child? Why are the rude eyes of strangers gazing on our sorrows?"

"Mother," said Neela, firmly, "that man hath spoken of a fearful crime—of the murder of the fair young child whom we loved so well; and he hath spoken darkly, too, of our being implicated in the deed. More I know not, save that he has come hither to drag us to the prison cell,—perhaps to death!"

"But we are innocent, my child."

"Alas, what will that avail us?—to be accused is to be condemned, for when did Nazarene show justice or mercy to the Hebrew?"

Sir Richard Falkner had stood a pained and unwilling listener, without uttering a word; but he narrowly watched the countenance of Gower, and a dark suspicion entered his mind, which, however, he chased away the next moment, as something too detestable for belief. In the meantime, the crowd without were growing impatient; they thirsted to begin their terrible drama; and as the moments flew by, and Gower came not forth, their impatience could no longer be restrained.

"The witches will escape us—why do we tarry here?" said one, giving vent at length to his long

on her shoulder, said in a loud voice—"I arrest you, Neela, daughter of Ephraim, commonly called the Jew of Chesterton, in the name of our Lord the King, for committing, or aiding in, the murder of Eugene, only son of Baron Gower, of Chesterton. It is my business also to arrest the aforesaid Ephraim, and Naomi his wife, as participators in the same foul crime ; and I demand that you instantly discover the place of his concealment."

Neela had arisen at the first sound of Gower's voice, and stood before him as pale as marble, yet betraying no sign of fear ; but when he concluded, she said, in a voice trembling with emotion, "My father is beyond thy reach ; he rests in a peaceful grave on the distant shores of Italy."

"Woman, I am not to be deceived by a feigned tale of death !" answered Gower, sternly. "The torture and the prison, perchance, may draw forth the truth ; thou and thine ancient accomplice must go forth with me."

"Nazarene !" replied Neela, her lip curling with scorn as she spoke ; "it is for thee and those of thy creed to speak falsely. What truth can be expected from men who, professing a religion of peace and love, tear from their houses and altars, and punish by a shameful death, those whose only crime is that they worship God according to the rites of their fathers ?"

"A less scornful tone would suit thy situation better," said Gower ; and then he added in a lower voice, which reached only the ear of Neela : "It is my turn to triumph now !" The maiden did not answer ;

The assailants paused and seemed irresolute; but again the voice of Gower was heard urging them on.

"They have bewitched the good knight by their spells," he said, "but heed him not,"—and suiting the action to the word, he thrust furiously at Sir Richard. Leslie Gower was young and vigorous, and although Falkner fought well and long, he was at length overpowered. During the conflict, a band of ruffians had forcibly separated the mother and child, and while one trampled on the senseless form of Naomi, another had wound his hand in the long tresses of her daughter, and, despite of her struggles, was tearing her away from her bleeding parent, when the crowd around the door suddenly gave way, and a faint cry of "The Baron! the baron!" broke upon the ear of Neela.

"My God! Thou hast not forsaken us!" she exclaimed, in a tone of deep thankfulness. It was indeed the Baron of Chesterton, who, accompanied by several armed followers, now entered the scene of violence, and well-nigh of murder.

The sword dropped from the hand of Leslie Gower, while the discomfited vassals, judging from the frown on the baron's brow how little he was pleased by their barbarous zeal, hastily retreated, and the sobs of Neela, as she bent over the inanimate and bleeding form of her mother, was all that broke the silence.

Sir Richard Falkner, pale, wounded, and exhausted, leaned on his broken sword, his manly face crimsoned with the shame of defeat; while Leslie Gower, dis-



smothered fury. "Let us fire the building and burn them in their den!" Fortunately, however, there was no fire near enough to carry the project into effect; and disappointed in their search, some of the most desperate rushed into the house with loud outcries.

Neela folded her arms still more closely around her mother in that moment of dread. Fierce faces were now filling up the doorway; but the sight of those helpless women made the crowd pause for an instant. They gazed in silence upon the lovely countenance of the Hebrew girl; but it did not suit the purpose of Leslie Gower to allow the calm to continue.

"Behold," he cried aloud; "behold the sorceress who has destroyed your master's child; not from hatred to that fair boy, but in mockery of the sufferings of the crucified, whose name is too holy to breathe in her presence! The blood of my mother's son cries out from the earth. Men of Chesterton, shall it cry in vain? Has the accursed one cast a spell upon ye? Smite, smite in the name of the Lord!" This appeal had the desired effect. They sprang like tigers towards their victims; and one unmanly villian, seizing a silver branch from the table, was about to fling it at the defenceless girl, when a powerful arm dashed him to the earth, and the giant form of Sir Richard Falkner stood between the crowd and the object of their wrath. While waving his sword above his head, he shouted aloud, "He who attempts violence against these women must reach them through my heart!"

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appointed even in the moment of triumph, stood gazing with a look of rage on the brother who through life had defeated his dearest hopes. From childhood his had been an envious and aspiring spirit. The second son of a powerful and wealthy baron, he hated the elder, who stood between him and the inheritance, and cursed the fate which had made him younger. Possessing strong passions, and incapable of noble or generous feeling, he yet had sufficient craft to veil his real character from those with whom he came in contact, and succeeded in gaining the hearts of his father's vassals by his specious manners. One thing had seemed to favour his hopes : his elder brother grew sickly and feeble, and his death was looked to by the aspiring Leslie as a thing not only probable, but certain. In the dark recesses of his heart he rejoiced, although he outwardly seemed to mourn over his decay, and all were blinded by his pretended affection, with the exception of Eugene, the young baron.

Endowed by nature with keen penetration, and the reverse of his brother in character and feelings, he alone pierced the veil that shrouded the soul of Leslie ; but he concealed his knowledge, for he knew it was essential to his safety not to appear to doubt.

Unwilling to await at home the slow progress of what he deemed certain decay, Leslie demanded and obtained permission of his father to proceed to the Holy Land, and join the crusaders in the war against the Saracens. He had scarcely been in Palestine a

year, when tidings reached him that his brother had been perfectly restored to health by a Jewish physician, and was wedded to the daughter of a neighbouring baron. Shortly after, he learned that his father was dead, and this determined him to return home; for he did not yet despair, by fair means or foul, of getting rid of his brother. On his journey he was taken prisoner, and after seven years' captivity, reached Chesterton in time to celebrate the sixth birthday of his brother's son. It needed all his self-command to repress the demon at his heart, as Eugene proudly showed him the lovely boy, and secretly cursing both, he vowed yet to be Baron of Chesterton.

He sought out the Jewish doctor who had restored his brother to health, and offered him immense wealth to destroy both father and son by poison; but Ephraim rejected his proposals with scorn, and Gower swore vengeance. Previously to this, he had seen Neela, and, dazzled by her beauty, had wooed her as a noble of England only could woo one of the outcasts of Judah. Her indignant rejection of his proposals was another motive for revenge.

It was a common thing in those days to accuse the Jews of crucifying Christian children; and only the year before, eighteen had been executed on a charge equally monstrous and absurd, of sacrificing in this manner a child called Hugh of Lincoln. To interested and fanatical judges, such things were not hard to prove, and Leslie, who knew neither pity nor remorse, eagerly seized upon the vulgar prejudice to work out

his own dark schemes. It was easy to get rid of the Baron's child, and accuse the Jew and his daughter of the crime ; and, aided by a single accomplice, who had been his own attendant from infancy, he set about accomplishing his purposes.

Eugene had been made acquainted by Ephraim, before his departure from England, with his brother's baseness ; and he rejoiced when Leslie departed for the court of King Henry.

Secure, as he imagined, in his absence, the Baron had gone over to the neighbouring town of Southampton, with his lady, for a day ; and, on his return, was horrified by the intelligence that the nurse had suddenly decamped with his child. That evening, while the distracted parents were searching for the lost one, Leslie Gower returned from the Court, then held at Winchester, and at once pointed suspicion towards the house of Ephraim. Then some one remembered having seen the nurse and her charge upon the beach, near the Jew's house, where all traces were lost. The rest has been told. The Baron no sooner heard of the danger which threatened Neela and her mother, than he hastened to prevent the fatal results which, but for his timely arrival, must have ensued.

"Thou art pale and terrified, poor girl !" said he, turning to the agitated Neela, who was attempting to raise her unconscious parent, "and art more in need of assistance than enabled to afford it. Behold thy work !" he continued, as he raised the bleeding form of Naomi, and laid her on a couch, while he gazed

sternly at his brother. "Did it not suffice that *one* murder should blacken thy soul? I had forgotten thee, my brave friend," he added, turning to Sir Richard. "But forgive me; for sorrow presses heavily on my head!"

Falkner grasped the Baron's hand warmly, as the latter bent his head to hide the tears that rolled down his cheeks.

## CHAPTER II.

It was a dark and stormy evening, and Neela sat in the little chamber in the castle to which she and her mother had been removed by the Baron to secure them from fresh attempts on the part of Leslie, watching the feverish and unquiet slumbers of her dying parent. She was alone, for not all the commands of the Baron could induce any of his lady's attendants to afford assistance to the unfortunate Jewess. They considered the interposition as the effect of witchcraft, and expected to see Neela and Naomi carried away by the Evil One before the dawn of day.

As the wind shook the little casement, it awakened the sleeper, and she feebly murmured her daughter's name, when in a moment the anxious watcher was by her side. The mother partly raised herself, and with a trembling hand put back the hair from Neela's white brow, while she addressed her thus :

" I would bless thee, my Neela, for my moments are numbered, and the death-dews are already on my brow. Fain would I linger a little longer for thy sake in this world of suffering ; but the decree of the Highest hath gone forth, and it may not be. It is sad to see thee thus, my fair child ; alone with thy dying parent—none to cheer thee in the hours of

affliction—none to whisper hope amid thy sorrowing. But there is one who is the Father of the fatherless, who watches over the orphan's fate, and to him I consign thee! I had hoped to see the bridal veil upon thine head, my best beloved,—to have supported thy trembling form beneath the nuptial canopy; and in resigning thee to one who hath loved thee well and long, I could have gone down to the grave without a sigh. But His will be done! This is a bitter and unlooked for trial for thee, my child, and thy lot will be lonely when I am gone;—but there thou wilt find consolation”—pointing to the prayer-book which lay on the table—“pray with me, my child, that though I die far from my kindred and my people, the last sound that greets my ear may be the praise of the Lord!” Repressing by a strong effort all outward signs of emotion, Neela opened the book, and commenced reading in a faltering voice, the prayer for the dying.

Naomi's lips moved, but she spake not, and the poor girl read on, though her eyes were filled with tears, and she could scarcely see the words. Gradually, however, her anguish mastered her resolution, and the book fell from her hand. At that moment a flash of lightning illuminated the little apartment, and its blue light played around the features—of the dead.

It is an awful thing to gaze upon the glazed eye, the blue lips, and stiffening limbs, when no tie of consanguinity attaches us to the departed; but how much more so must it be to the orphan who watches alone at



the midnight hour, and by the lightning's glare, the corpse of a beloved mother! She whose faith forbade her to look upon the dead of her kin, was now the only watcher by the corpse of her nearest relative.

Long and wildly Neela wept, but her tears were rather the lava stream that burns, than the gentle shower that refreshes. Gradually, too, a sickening feeling of terror crept over her; horrible visions crowded on her brain, and she who had so loved her mother while living, feared to look upon her when dead. The very stillness made the blood creep coldly in her veins, and she would have given worlds to hear the sound of a human voice. In her despair she again had recourse to prayer.

Neela was calmer when she had concluded, and repeating one warm kiss on the cold face of the dead, she covered it with a veil, and returned to her seat. She had sat about a quarter of an hour, musing on her desolate situation, when a slight noise aroused her, and raising her head with a start, her eye fell on the stern countenance of Leslie Gower. She would have shrieked, but her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth, and she was unable to utter a sound.

"Fear not, maiden," said Leslie, as he took her cold hand in his, "I came not to injure thee;" but his touch aroused all her dormant faculties, and she uttered a wild cry for help.

"Repeat that cry," said Leslie, drawing a dagger from his vest, "and 'ere one step can advance to aid thee, this blade shall drink thine heart's blood. Why

shouldst thou fear me, trembling fool? My purpose is to protect thee."

"Does the wolf protect the lamb, or the vulture the dove? I know thee too well to trust thy faithless promises."

"As thou wilt, fair Neela," and a bitter sneer curled his lip: "thy trust is in the promise of my high-souled brother, and art secure in his powerful protection. But know, proud Jewess, the rising of to-morrow's sun will be the signal of doom to thee. Already the monks are preparing to drag thee from thine asylum, on a charge of sorcery, and the Baron of Chesterton dares not resist the power of the Church. I alone can save thee. Even now a boat waits on the beach. Follow me silently, and 'ere the day dawns, it shall convey thee far beyond the reach of danger."

"Whither?" said Neela, faintly.

"Whithersoever thou wilt; and when some urgent affairs which demand my presence here are adjusted I will follow thee, and devote my future life to thy happiness."

"Come hither," said Neela, in a tone of unnatural calmness; "I have something to show to thee 'ere I answer thee."

Leslie rose, still retaining his hold of the dagger. Slowly she removed the covering she had laid on the face of the mother; and as he bent forward to gaze, a shudder passed through his iron frame, and he felt a momentary thrill of horror.

"I had forgotten thy mother," he said, turning to

the pale girl beside him ; " but it is better thus ; she would but have proved an incumbrance to thy flight, and the hand of cruelty cannot hurt the dead. Neela, I will be father, mother, lover, everything to thee ;" and he was about to press his lip to her pure cheek, when with the strength of despair she flew to the door ; but he followed her with the swiftness of thought, and drew her back 'ere she could attain her purpose. " Remember," he said, touching the hilt of his dagger, " one cry, and thy fate is sealed."

" Monster ! cannot the hallowed presence of the dead restrain thine unholy passion ? Begone ! the vilest of deaths is preferable to thine abhorred touch !"

" Bravely spoken !" and he laughed a bitter laugh. " But hast thou considered, gentle Neela, what the death will be of which thou hast spoken so calmly ? Canst thou, whose youth and beauty have been guarded like a well-prized jewel or delicate flower, bear the rude gaze—the execrations of an insulting crowd ? Are those lovely limbs fitted for the torture and the flame ? Trust me, thou wilt think better of this, and repent when repentance is too late." But Neela heard him not, for, exhausted by previous terror and excitement, she had fainted.

" So," he exclaimed, " fortune favours me. The disappearance of the girl, and the death of the mother, will confirm the popular belief in their guilt ; and then Eugene may doubt if he will. Yes ! I shall yet be Baron of Chesterton." Raising Neela from the ground, he wrapped her veil around her, and bore her

swiftly through the secret passages, with which he was well acquainted, to the sea shore, where he found the boat which he had ordered to be in readiness. Laying her gently on the sands, he approached the vessel to give some necessary directions to the boatmen.

The fresh air, playing upon her face, revived Neela's senses; and by the grey dawn of light she beheld a large boat filled with men, silently but swiftly approaching the beach. Her heart beat, and her brain whirled at the expectation of succour; but she did not stir, for she saw that neither Gower nor his accomplices perceived it.

Having finished his directions, Leslie Gower approached to raise his victim; but Neela had watched her moment, and springing up as he came near to her, she fled towards the strange boat, the crew of which had now landed. In a moment, with his sword drawn, Gower was at her side.

"On your peril," he said, "I command you not to interfere. She is a king's prisoner."

"It is false! it is false!" shrieked Neela: "he has torn me from my mother's corse,—from the shelter of my friends, and is forcing me away against my will."

"Is this true?" said the foremost of the party, turning to Gower. But at the sound of that voice, Neela sprang to his side, exclaiming, "My God! my God! thou hast not forsaken the orphan." The stranger was her betrothed lover, and in an instant she was clasped in his arms.

"Thy blood be upon thine own head!" cried Gower,

as he aimed a blow at the unarmed youth, which, had it taken effect, would have deprived Neela of her last hope: but the sword was dashed aside by one who had already perilled life and limb for her sake; and Sir Richard Falkner, drawn by her shrieks to the spot, once more saved her from her dreaded foe.

"Shame on thee, thou disgrace to knighthood!" said the old warrior; "thou, who, on winning thy golden spurs, swore to protect the innocent and oppressed, art violating, without remorse, that sacred covenant." Gower did not answer, and the sword fell from his powerless hand, for his eyes were fixed on an object which palsied his daring spirit: yet there was nothing fearful in the sight he beheld.

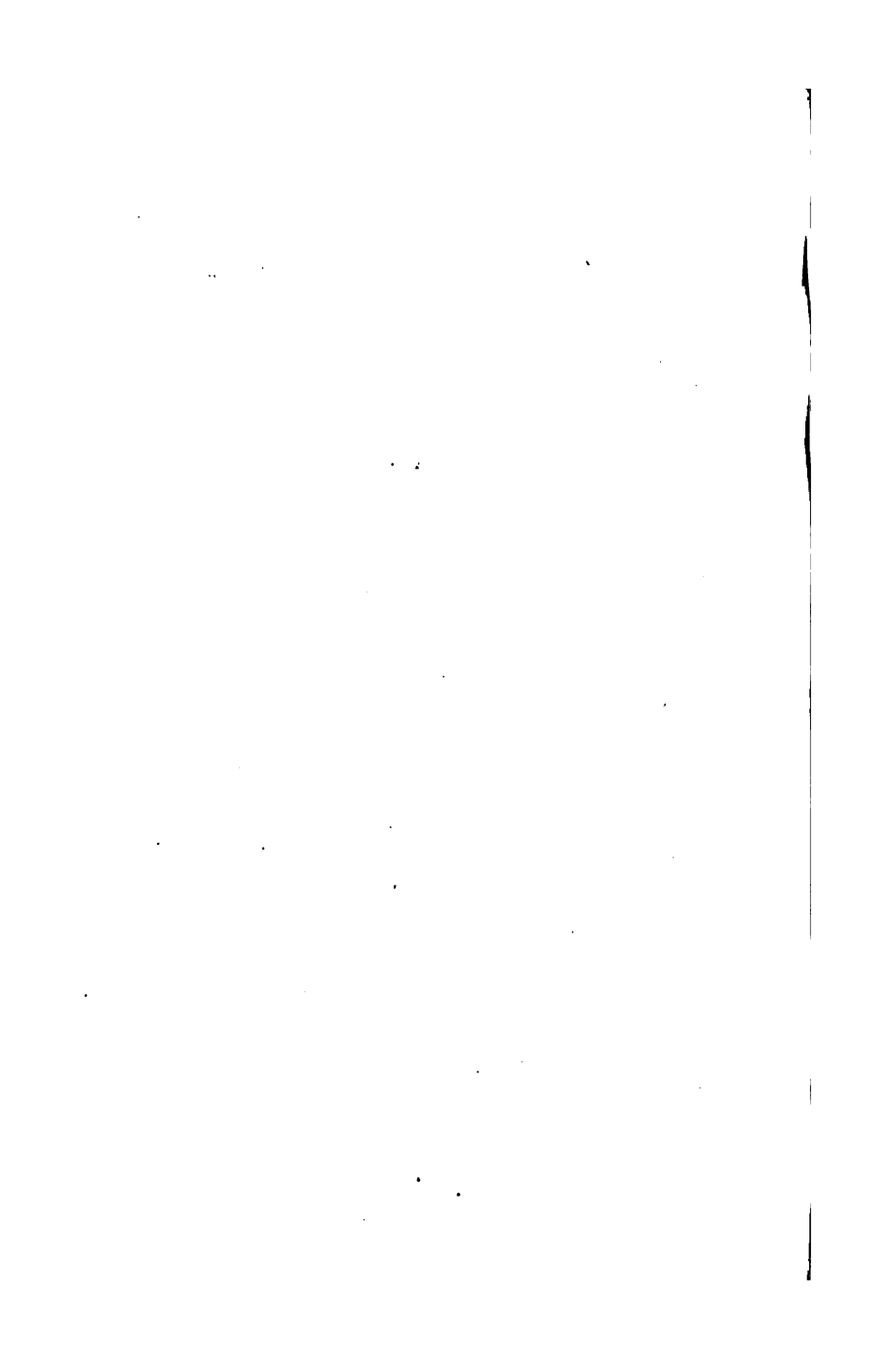
"Can the sea give up its dead?" he murmured hoarsely, "or do the murdered return to earth, as priests have told, to detect and punish their destroyers? No! no!—it cannot be; my senses deceive me:—yet it is there—still there!" and the strong man, the scoffer, who had railed at religion and virtue as chimeras of the heated brain, overcome by the consciousness of guilt and superstitious terror, fainted. But none heeded him: Sir Richard Falkner and Neela had recognized the Baron's lost child in the object of his dread.

The sequel is soon told. Leslie Gower had bribed the accomplice already named to persuade the nurse, who was much attached to him, to meet him in a lonely part of the beach, during the Baron's absence, with her young charge.

Gilbert had agreed to murder both nurse and child ; but his heart misgave him in the moment of trial : moved by the woman's eager entreaties, yet dreading both to lose the bribe and meet the vengeance of Gower, he chose a medium course, and forcing her and the child into a boat, cut the moorings and set them adrift on the wide waters without food. He then returned to his master, and informed him that all was over. That Providence, however, which watches over the helpless, suffered them not to perish ; and after a day and night of terror, they were picked up by the vessel that was bearing to England the affianced husband of Neela.

When the funeral of her mother was over, and the first month of mourning passed, Neela became the bride of Ezra ; and leaving the now desolate home of her childhood, returned with him to Italy. The Baron and Baroness blessed her when they bade her farewell, and even dropped a tear as they beheld the bounding barque that bore her away from the shores of England for ever.

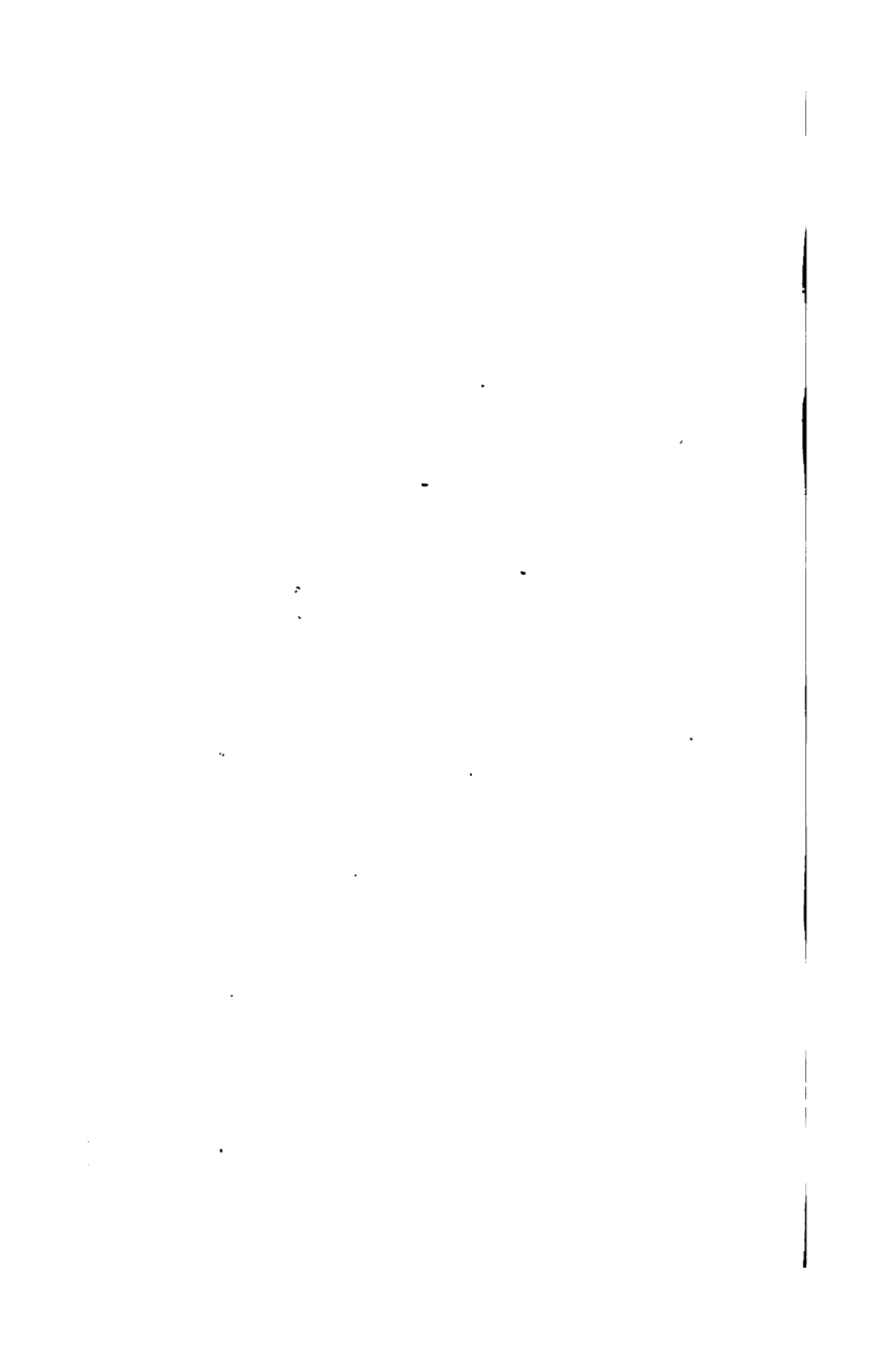
Of Leslie Gower, from the moment the Baron's heir re-appeared, nothing more was heard. Whether he returned to the Holy Land, and had fallen in honourable combat against the infidel, or spent the remainder of his life in atonement beneath the cowl of a monk, for the sins of his youth, Eugene could never ascertain.



J A C O B ;

A TRADITION.





# J A C O B ;

## A TRADITION.

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It was a festival day at Munich. The citizens kept holiday in honour of the nuptials of the Princess Matilda, the Duke's only daughter.

In the principal street a crowd had assembled to watch for the coming of the Duke, who, mounted on a stately charger, and surrounded by a group of richly dressed nobles, was riding from the church towards the palace.

Suddenly a young man, dressed in the Jewish garb, rushed in front of the crowd as the procession came up, crying, "Justice! my Lord Duke, justice!"

"Justice on whom," said the Duke, with difficulty restraining his fiery steed:

"On him who sits at my lord's right hand—Ernest, Count of Wolfstein."

Scarcely had the name been spoken when the horse either accidentally or urged by his rider, bounded

forward and the Jew was thrown under its hoofs, and but for the interposition of a bystander, he would have been crushed to death.

The Duke passed on, followed by his Court and the crowd. Of all the witnesses of the foregoing scene, there remained only Jacob's preserver, and a woman, who, moved by compassion, was endeavouring to restore the stunned and bruised youth to consciousness.

"Come with me to my dwelling," said the woman, when her kindly efforts had succeeded. "It is near, and for thy mother's sake, to whom I have owed many a kindness, I will assist thee."

"Strive to rouse thyself," said the stranger, to whom Jacob was already so greatly indebted, coming forward, "strive to reach the woman's house; each moment thou remainest here is fraught with danger, since thou hast offended one who never forgives, Ernest of Wolfstein. I will follow, for I would fain have speech with thee.

With slow and trembling steps, for he was still bewildered from his fall, Jacob followed the woman to her dwelling; and his preserver, Baron von Adheim, after looking carefully round to see that he was not observed, also entered the humble abode where Jacob had taken refuge.

Von Adheim found Jacob sitting on a low stool, his face buried in his hands and moaning bitterly, while at intervals he murmured, "My father! oh, my father, either basely murdered or pining in a dungeon, is your fate to remain for ever unknown, and the base Wolf-

stein to triumph in his guilt?" Fool that I was to imagine that a Jew's fate would be aught to the Duke of Bavaria.

"Be a man," said Von Adheim, advancing and laying his hand heavily on Jacob's shoulder. "Thou didst show courage enough but now, and but for me thy rashness had cost thee thy life. He who wronged thee is mine enemy also, and I owe him such a deep debt of vengeance that I would almost forego my eternal salvation to be avenged on him."

These words were spoken with such a look and tone of bitter hatred that Jacob could not doubt the sincerity of the speaker. "Come," continued Von Adheim, after a short pause, in which he appeared to be struggling with some painful emotion, "tell me thine history; perchance, for I am not without some influence, I may yet teach thee a way to avenge thyself upon this haughty count."

"Only do this, only help me to unravel the mystery of my father's fate, and I will make thee the wealthiest lord in all Bavaria," said Jacob eagerly.

"I will not deceive thee," said Von Adheim scornfully, "I work in this matter to avenge mine own wrongs, not thine. Had thine enemy been other than Ernest of Wolfstein I had not stirred to aid thee. It matters not to tell thee of what I have endured at his hand. It is enough for thee that I am his sworn foe, and as such, *thy* friend. Come, tell me thine history."

In a few words, broken by ejaculations of sorrow,

Jacob related to Von Adheim the cause of his appeal to the Duke.

His father, one of the wealthiest Israelites of Munich, had lent Wolfstein, on his bond, a large sum. The bond being due, he, at Wolfstein's request, set out for his castle, situated in a wood some leagues from the capital. He had been seen to enter the castle by one of his own people who had accompanied him near to the gates, and waited many hours for his coming forth, until alarmed for his own safety, he returned to Munich. From that time, nearly two weeks, until the present hour, his wife and son had vainly sought tidings of him, and in answer to their enquiries, Wolfstein stated that he had paid the bond, and that Moses had left him to return home, but had doubtless fallen a victim to robbers, as he left his castle long before sunset on the same day.

"May not this be true?" said Von Adheim, as Jacob paused in his narrative.

"That could not be," answered Jacob, "unless the Count's followers were in league with them; no banditti would be allowed to plunder so near his castle; besides, the man who accompanied my father waited until sunset for his return, and had he left Wolfstein, as the Count stated, he must have seen him.

"But why not take thy witness with thee to the Duke?"

"Alas, my Lord, he is an old man with a large family, and fears to provoke the enmity of a powerful noble."

“ And for thee,” said Von Adheim, “ dost thou not fear the same danger ? ”

“ My lord, I am my father’s only child ; it is my bounden duty to rescue him if living and detained by Count Wolfstein for the sake of a ransom ; and if dead, to afford to his corpse the rites of sepulchre. Should it be the will of the Most High that I perish in the attempt, at least I will do all a man can do.”

When Jacob ceased to speak, Von Adheim stood for some moments in deep thought. At last he said, “ I will gain thee speech of the Duke. Albert is just when left to the dictates of his own noble nature. Tell him thy tale as thou hast told it me ; let him test its truth or falsehood, but remember, if thou failest to prove thine allegations, thy life is not worth one hour’s purchase. Go home and ponder on it. If thy purpose still holds good, after a night’s reflection, meet me after matins at the portal gate of the palace ; but remember, if I gain thee speech of the Duke, thou breathest no word of what has passed to-day between thee and me.” So saying he passed out of the house, and the woman, who had waited without during the conference between Jacob and Von Adheim, re-entered.

“ Be guided by me, good youth,” she said, as the echoes of Von Adheim’s footsteps died away, “ meddle not in the quarrels of these proud nobles, who will but use thee for their tool, and cast thee aside when their work is done ; but go home to thy good mother, who, if she were not a Jewess, would be worthy

to be a saint. Make her not childless as well as widowed."

Thanking the good woman for her well-meant advice, and forcing upon her a piece of gold, Jacob turned his footsteps homeward.

## CHAPTER II.

AVOIDING the principal streets, which were crowded with revellers, Von Adheim on leaving Jacob turned towards the palace. He had not proceeded far when he was joined by a man in the dress of a noble, whom he greeted with evident pleasure. "Well met, Steinfels; I was even now on the road to seek thee, but feared like the rest thou wouldst be too much engrossed with feasting to have a moment to spare to thine old friend and companion."

"Well thou knowest, Sigismund," said the other, his brow darkening, "that the sight of Ernest of Wolfstein, a favoured and honoured guest of the Duke's, would poison the finest banquet for me; and to avoid the sight of his face and the sound of his hated voice, I excused myself to the Duke, and came forth from the palace polluted by his presence."

"Well, answered, Von Adheim; "perchance he will not much longer be the honoured and beloved of Albert, who, did he know his real character, would spurn him from his presence. And now I will tell thee why I sought thee to-day;" and in a low voice, so as not to be heard by any chance passenger, he related to Steinfels, who had not accompanied the Duke



that morning, Jacob's attempt to speak to the Duke, and all that followed.

"But in what will the story of the Jew help us," said the other, moodily; "what is a Jew more or less in Munich to thee or me?"

"Gain Jacob speech of the Duke, thou canst do it," answered Von Adheim; "Albert is himself the soul of honour. Prove Wolfstein a thief and murderer, and his downfall and disgrace are certain. The risk is the Jew's alone, and to us, if he succeed, the gain is certain, and our deep wrongs are avenged. Hast thou forgotten that he stole from thee my sister, thy betrothed bride, and afterwards made her betrothal to thee the pretext for dissolving his marriage when he was tired of her. Oh, Steinfels, could I fulfil the oath of vengeance I swore when I stood upon her dishonoured and untimely grave, the purpose of my life would be fulfilled."

For some moments Steinfels did not reply. The tempest of passion Von Adheim had aroused by the sad memories he had awakened was too mighty to be controlled. At length seizing Von Adheim's hand, and wringing it with a force that told how strongly his feelings were excited, he said, "The Jew shall see the Duke, let the risk be what it will. We will arrange to-night when and how. Come with me now to my lodgings."

### CHAPTER III.

JACOB found his mother anxiously awaiting him, for she knew on what errand he had gone forth that day, and her heart was racked by a thousand fears, both for her son and her husband. After receiving her blessing, Jacob related to her all that had passed that day, and the promise of Von Adheim to gain him an interview with the Duke of Bavaria.

Much as Deborah dreaded the peril her son was about to encounter, she dared not dissuade him from taking the only means that offered to unravel her husband's fate, for she hoped that Wolfstein was merely detaining him prisoner for the sake of ransom—a proceeding by no means unusual in that age and country.

With trembling hands she set food before him and prayed him to eat, and though to please her he washed, said a blessing, and brake bread, he was fain to put by the meat almost untasted; and covering his face with his hands, remained lost in gloomy thought.

At length, unable to bear the oppression of his own thoughts, he rose up and said, "Mother, I must visit Caleb Ben Aschen, and try if I can prevail on him to accompany me to-morrow, since his testimony would assist me much with the Duke, if he will but

speak, but alas! I fear selfish terror with him will outweigh every other consideration.

Fain would Deborah have persuaded her son to rest and refresh himself, but she knew that unless she laid a positive command upon him she would not prevail, and unwilling to do that, she suffered him to depart, while she remained to weep and pray for him.

On reaching the abode of the old man who had accompanied his father on the fatal journey to Wolfstein, Jacob found him within, but the mere mention of his purpose reduced him to such a state of abject terror that with tears he entreated the young man to desist from a course that could only bring ruin on himself and the whole Jewish community of Munich.

Jacob turned sadly away from the cowardly Aschen, and sought the elders of the congregation to beseech their prayers in the Synagogue for a blessing on his filial efforts; and, although they too prayed him to consider the risk he ran, his calm resolution to perform to the utmost his duty to his father prevailed over all, and he returned home to pass the night with his mother in vigil and prayer, and the dawn of day saw him at the appointed place to meet Von Adheim.

## CHAPTER IV.

DUKE ALBERT paced his cabinet with an unsteady step and troubled breast, while at intervals he murmured, "Holy Saints! a robber and murderer! I have heard many evil reports of Ernest of late, but nothing like this. Yet the tale may be untrue. Steinfels and Von Adheim are his sworn foes, and perchance have set on the Jew to forge this miserable tale. I will see him myself, and wring the truth from him. Ho, without there!"

At the Duke's call, Steinfels, who had been waiting without, entered immediately.

"Bring the Jew and Von Adheim hither; I will test to the utmost the truth of the tale thou hast told me."

Without reply, Steinfels departed, and returned in a few moments with his friend and Jacob.

As they entered the cabinet, the Duke turned fiercely towards the Jew, and fixing his eyes upon him, exclaimed abruptly, "Jew, what enemy of Wolfstein hath set thee upon thy base accusation? Speak the truth, or thou diest a dog's death."

"Does my lord think," answered Jacob, as he prostrated himself before the Duke, "that the meanest of thy servants had dared come with a falsehood on his

lips into thy presence, or that aught save a most sacred duty could have nerved me to brave the peril I incur in breathing an accusation against a name so honoured as that of Ernest of Wolfstein."

Jacob's words and manner at once carried the conviction to the mind of the Duke that his was no tale forged to the purposes of others, and in a milder tone he said, "Tell me thy history; if it be true, thou shalt have justice—strict justice for thy wrongs; but if it prove false, I will have thee torn in pieces by wild horses, as a warning to false accusers."

Thus urged, Jacob repeated simply the history of his father's disappearance and his own fruitless efforts to discover what had become of him.

"Thou sayest," said the Duke, when he had concluded, "that there was a witness who saw thy father enter the castle of Wolfstein, and waited many hours vainly for his coming forth, where is he?"

"My lord," said Jacob, bitterly, "fears for his own safety have made him refuse my prayer to come with me hither; besides, he is of my own despised and persecuted race; he well knows his testimony would avail nought."

"Perchance," said the Duke, "this man himself murdered thy father for the gold he carried."

"My lord, murder is a thing utterly unknown to the people of my faith; so sacred is life held amongst them that the thing is impossible; besides, this man is old and feeble, and my father was hale and vigorous and in the prime of life. It could not be."

Again the Duke hurriedly paced the cabinet, while Jacob stood with bowed head and pallid face, awaiting his decree ; and Steinfels and Von Adheim, who had not spoken a word, exchanged significant looks with each other. At length the Duke paused in his walk, and stood confronting Jacob.

"Listen, Jew !" he said, sternly, "to my determination respecting thee. I will send a guard of soldiers to search the castle of Wolfstein ; if thou findest there thy father, dead or alive, the Count shall pay the penalty of his crimes, even though I have loved him as my own son. But mark me, if thou hast dishonoured an innocent man, by an accusation which thou failest to prove, I will deliver thee over to the vengeance of Count Wolfstein, and let him deal with thee as he will. By to-morrow's dawn all will be ready, if thy courage fail not."

Thanking the Duke for his promise, Jacob left the cabinet, and was conducted by Von Adheim to the gate of the palace.

## CHAPTER V.

THE indignation of Count Wolfstein, when he was summoned to the Duke's presence and told of the charge against him, may be better imagined than described ; yet when Albert declared that for the sake of his own fame it was necessary that the affair should be fully investigated, he declared his willingness to submit to any measures the Duke thought fit to take ; and when the latter desired him to remain in his cabinet, under the charge of Von Adheim, until the following day, and to forbear all communication with his own servants, he offered no remonstrance, and it was only in the glitter of his eye that Von Adheim could read the bitter hatred that he had awakened against himself by the part he had taken in Jacob's charge.

Early on the morrow a party of the Duke's soldiers, headed by Von Adheim and Steinfels, who had in their charge both the Count and the Jew, reached the Castle of Wolfstein.

The Count's followers, when aware of the errand on which they came, loaded the Hebrew with curses and revilings, and it was only the absolute commands of the Count himself that prevented their resisting the

Duke's authority and tearing his unfortunate accuser to pieces.

From noon till sundown had the search proceeded, but in vain had every nook been searched for some trace of the father of Jacob. And now they stood in the great Hall, and Wolfstein spoke.

"Dog of a Jew," he said, "no hole in this castle big enough to contain a rat or mouse has escaped thy searching. Art thou now ready to pay the penalty of thy daring, by suffering the torments I shall inflict upon thee as a foretaste of the hell to which I shall speed thee?" "Come," he continued, turning to Steinfels and Von Adheim, "yield up your prisoner, and for ye who have urged on this insulting charge, your day of reckoning will also come."

"One moment yet, I beseech ye," said Jacob, turning to Steinfels, "and I am ready." He was deadly pale, and Steinfels and Von Adheim, who attached full belief to Wolfstein's guilt, and felt for the devoted son who was to become a martyr to his filial devotion, warned off Wolfstein's followers who were about to seize him, saying, "Till nightfall he is in our charge; the Duke's orders are positive—he cannot escape you."

Profiting by the breathing time thus afforded him, Jacob repeated the confession of his faith—"Hear, oh Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One." Then clapping his hands together, he exclaimed, "God of my ancestors, if my father has been murdered, and his body hidden by the lord of this castle, as I firmly believe, grant that his spirit may reveal itself to me



for one moment, so that I may know I die not accusing the innocent."

His prayer was granted. In the anguish of his supplication he had stamped his foot upon the ground, a secret spring had been touched, a trap-door flew open, and revealed the body of the unfortunate Moses hidden beneath, while Wolfstein, detected in the moment of his triumph, stood the image of rage and despair.

"Robber and murderer," said the Duke, who in the disguise of a man-at-arms, unknown to all, had himself accompanied the expedition; "prepare to receive the reward of thy crimes."

"Nay," answered Wolfstein, "thus I still defy the world;" and seizing a dagger from a page who stood near, he plunged it into his own heart.

## CHAPTER VI.

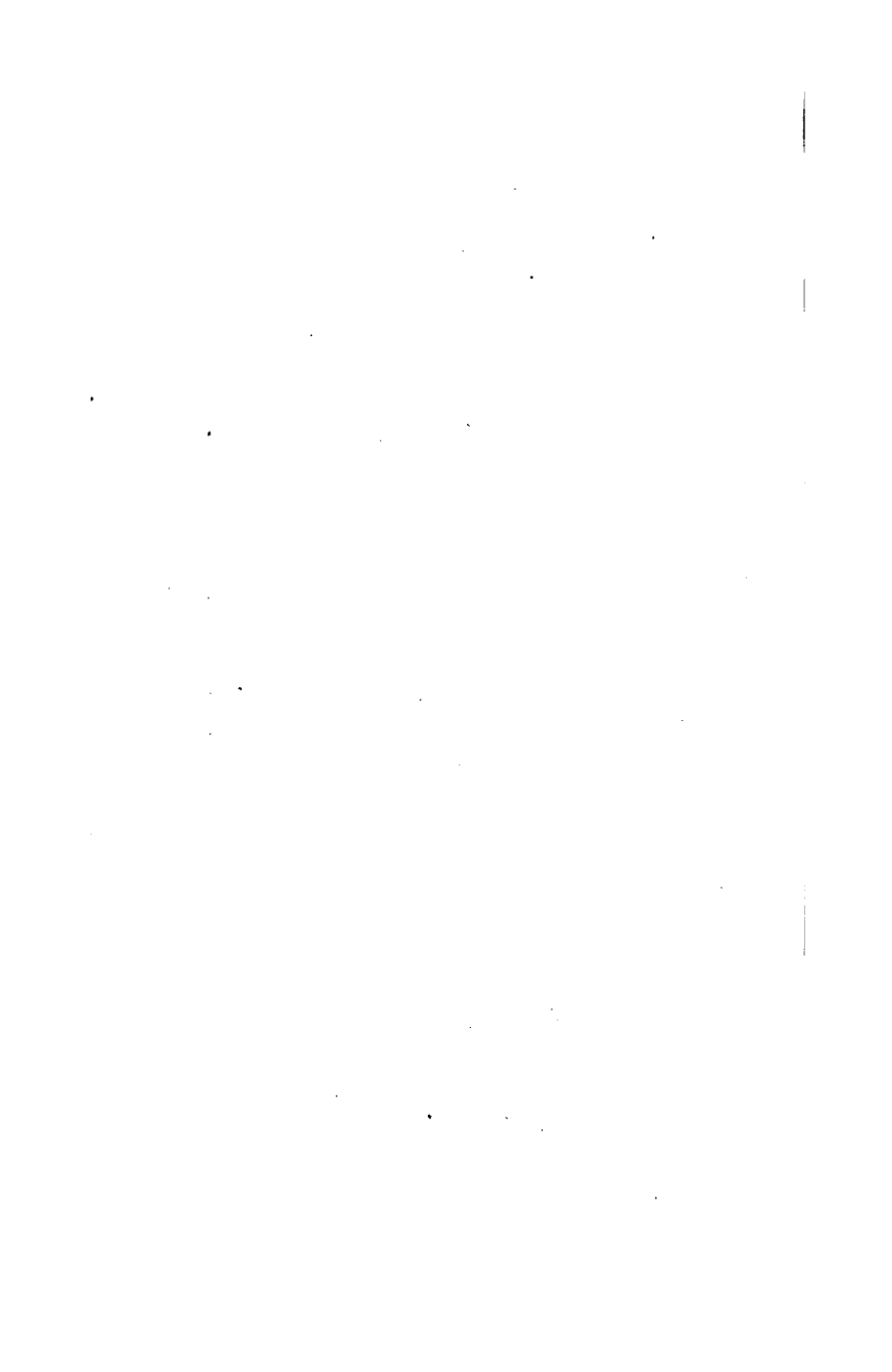
DEEPLY thankful even in the midst of his sorrow to that Almighty Power which had vouchsafed him so signal a deliverance, Jacob returned home, bearing with him the body of his dead father, which was the next day interred in consecrated ground.

On the following week Von Adheim visited Jacob in his own home, bearing a message from the Duke, and a heavy purse of gold.

The message was kindly worded, but Albert advised Jacob to quit Bavaria as speedily as possible to avoid the vengeance of Wolfstein's powerful family, and Von Adheim seconded the Duke's advice, which Jacob lost no time in carrying into effect:

He left Munich with his mother, and settled in one of the neighbouring states, where his descendants are still to be found, amongst whom his history is still told, with pride in his courage and filial piety, and deep thankfulness to the Almighty Power that shielded him in his great peril.

THE END.



A L M A H :

THE

MAIDEN MARTYR.



# A L M A H :

THE

## MAIDEN MARTYR.

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"My son, thine eyes are dim, thy cheeks are pale, food scarcely passes thy lips, thy smile gladdens thy mother's heart no more. My son, what grief hast thou that I, who love thee as mine own life, cannot share?"

Ali, the young man thus addressed, was the only son of Fatima, the rich widow of a Moorish merchant. He was the idol of his mother, and until lately the young man had been known as the boldest hunter, the bravest rider, the gayest reveller, and the best marksman in Tangiers; but, as his mother had truly said, a great change had latterly come over him. He had given up all his former pursuits, and spent his whole time upon the housetop which overlooked the garden of their neighbour, Abraham Ben Yussuf, a Jewish merchant with whom they were on terms of friendly

intercourse; for in Tangiers, unlike other Moorish cities, the Jews were not confined to a separate quarter. Ali shunned all intercourse with his former associates, scarcely speaking even to his mother, and sat for hours smoking, or absorbed in painful thoughts.

Seriously alarmed as she was at the change, Fatima had hitherto avoided questioning him, hoping that it was but a youthful freak; but when day after day went by, and his melancholy rather increased than abated, she broke her resolution, and spoke as we have seen.

For some minutes Ali stood silently musing, as if some struggle were going on within him. At length he spake in a trembling voice, "Mother, since thou urgest it so strongly, I will tell thee what is eating away my health and strength. Know that I love Almah, the fair daughter of our Jewish neighbour, and thy son will die if he cannot obtain her for a wife."

"Holy prophet! what words are these, my son?" cried Fatima, struck with dismay at his unexpected avowal; "are there no lovely girls in Morocco, of thine own faith, that thou shouldst throw away thine heart upon a Jewess. Moreover, Almah is promised long since in marriage—ten days from this her bridal takes place. Trust to thy mother, Ali; she will find thee a fairer and richer bride than this Jewish maiden who hath bewitched thee with her spells."

"Nay, mother," answered the youth, passionately,

"thou knowest Almah is good as she is beautiful. I admired her when first I saw her, a lovely child, at play with my sister in thy harem, but it was not until Zorayda told me that she was to wed another that I discovered how madly I loved her. In vain have I since striven to subdue my passion. Without her my life is worth nothing to me. Mother, if thou canst not give me the Jewish maiden as my wife, thy son must die."

Fatima was alarmed by the wildness of his looks and manner; she had never in her life denied him anything, and now she answered—

"Alas, if it rested only with me, my son, not a moment shouldst thou ask in vain, but these Hebrews wed only amongst themselves. Woe is me; I fear thou lovest in vain."

"Mother, it cannot, shall not be vain," exclaimed Ali, passionately; "set thy woman's wit to work, since I would rather she and I were both dead than see her wedded to another."

Fatima wrung her hands despairingly, for her son's look and manner showed her how terribly he was in earnest, and she knew the young girl, besides the difference in religion, loved another. Her cousin, to whom she was betrothed, had grown up in the same house with her. The marriage day was fixed. She and her daughter had consented to appear at the feast, and had already prepared rich presents for the bride. How, then, could she ask her, in the face of such



knowledge, to give up her faith and her love to become the bride of Ali?

Ali watched her eagerly, for he read her thoughts in her face, but he knew his power over her too well not to feel certain that she would use every effort to gain his wishes, and the result proved that he had not deceived himself,

"Ali, my beloved," said Fatima at last, "rest content; if there be any earthly means to compass it, Alma shall be thy bride. I will not delay an instant to seek her mother, since there is no time to lose."

While Fatima prepared herself to go forth, Ali repaired once more to the housetop to watch, himself unseen, the movements of the maiden he loved.

## CHAPTER II.

THE household of Abraham Ben Yussuf were busy with preparations for Almah's bridal, and she herself, unconscious of the love she had inspired in her Moorish neighbour—a love that was to prove so fatal to her—sat by the side of a fountain in her father's garden, busy with embroidery, and singing, in the gladness of her heart, sweet snatches of song. A younger sister sat near her, also busy with her needle, and between the intervals of song they spoke of Almah's approaching bridal.

"Our cousin returns from Mogadore to-morrow," said Huldah, the younger of the sisters. "Oh, Almah, how few maidens in Morocco are so fortunate as thou art, to wed one who loves thee so tenderly, with such parents, and such a husband as thou wilt have. Thou wast indeed born under a fortunate star."

"And with such a sister, thou shouldst have said," answered Almah, fondly embracing her as she spoke, and then again burst forth into song; while the unseen watcher on the housetop of the Moorish widow drank in with avidity every sound of her sweet voice.

In the meantime, Fatima had entered the house, and greeted Rica, Almah's mother. After a few compliments, Fatima asked Rica to dismiss her attendants,

as she wished to consult her on a matter of great importance ; and inwardly wondering what secret her neighbour could have to communicate, yet far from guessing the truth, Rica dismissed her attendants, and they were left alone.

Fatima cautiously approached the object of her visit by inquiring for Almah. "She is in the garden," answered Rica ; " shall I send for her ?"

"Nay," replied Fatima : and then, in answer to Rica's inquiries concerning her son and daughter's health, she shook her head and sighed, as she said, "Zorayda is well, praise be to Allah, but my son is sick, and it is concerning him I came to speak with you. My Ali, as thou knowest, was all a fond mother's heart could wish. Amongst the youths of Tangiers none equalled him in bravery and beauty, but he is sorely changed. It is more than three moons since I first noticed a change in Ali, but days passed after days, and I forebore to speak to him, for I thought that his increasing dislike to society and his love to remain in the house were mere whims that would pass away, but each day I have seen him grow paler and thinner. My heart grew heavy, and to-day I questioned him until he revealed to me the cause of his grief, and I found that it was love."

"Wonderful !" ejaculated Rica, not knowing what to say, and astonished that the Moslem lady should come to tell her of her son's passion, as, although Fatima sometimes condescended to visit her and to notice Almah, she had taken care that her Jewish

neighbour should understand the distance between a Moslem lady and a Jewess on whom it was her pleasure to bestow her notice.

Fatima continued, fixing her eyes keenly on the face of the Jewess, "Yes, my son loves, and unhappily he has fixed his heart upon a Jewess, a fair young girl, whom he has known from her childhood, and who, I believe, is good as she is beautiful. Therefore I have consented to overlook her being of another creed if she will forsake her unclean religion to become his bride. Is not this Hebrew maiden born under a fortunate star to win the love of a youth like Ali?"

Rica's heart almost stood still, for, although her daughter's name had not been mentioned, she guessed too well the fatal truth, and she feared the consequences.

Meantime Almah's voice came in from the garden, clear and sweet, full of innocent mirth. Poor girl! from that day never was her voice heard in happy song again.

Fatima saw with a woman's quickness of perception that Rica understood her, and after a short pause, she went on, "Thy daughter Almah is very fair, worthy to be the bride of a true believer. Let her leave her unclean religion, and become the wife of my only son Ali."

Stunned and overwhelmed by this proposal, Rica stood for some minutes utterly unable to reply. At last, seeing Fatima's eyes fixed upon her, she stammered out, "My daughter is unworthy of such an

honour, noble lady; moreover, she is, as thou knowest, betrothed, almost married; it cannot be."

"But it shall, it must be," answered Fatima, with the arrogance of a Moslem speaking to a Jewess; "what dog of a Jew dare put in his claim against Ali, the son of Ibrahim. Moreover, thy daughter is already half a Mahommedan, since the Cadi's wife, my daughter, has long honoured her with her friendship, and doubtless sought to teach her the true faith. Be reasonable, Rica, and thankful to seize the blessing offered thee."

"It cannot be," answered the unhappy Jewess, her feelings mastering her prudence. "Better, far better, that my daughter should be dead than a renegade, even if the Sultan of Morocco asked her for his wife."

The eyes of Fatima flashed fury as she exclaimed, while she shook her hand at Rica, "Blasphemer, how darest thou name with thine irreverent lips the head of the true believers. Thou hast heaped coals of fire on thine head by thy insolent refusal of a proposal that would have conferred the highest honour upon thee. But in spite of thy refusal, thine Almah shall be the wife of Ali. I spit upon and despise thine opposition." So saying, with a gesture of abhorrence and contempt, she left the house, and with her departed all the gladness of that hitherto happy home.

### CHAPTER III.

IN order to make my narrative intelligible to the general reader, it is necessary to give a slight sketch of the state of the Jews in Morocco at the period to which this tale refers, and which existed with little modification until the generous and philanthropic efforts of Sir Moses Montefiore, to whom be all honour, last year. God grant that the good he then effected may prove permanent.

In nearly all the cities of Morocco the Jews resided in separate quarters, and in many, were locked in at night. The men were only allowed to wear two colours, blue and black, and compelled to go bare-footed ; while the women had to pull off their slippers in passing a mosque, or in presence of any one holding authority, or even of the meanest slave of the Sultan's household. The word of a Jew was not taken against a Moslem in any court of justice. A Moslem might ill-treat and plunder a Jew, and the Jew had no remedy. If when struck he raised his hand to strike back, the offending limb was forfeited. The Jewish children were beaten and stoned even by little Mahommedans in the street, and there was no help for them. But the worst remains to be told. Mr. E. L. Mitford, author of an appeal on behalf of the Jews,

published not many years since, and who himself saw what he describes so vividly, says, "The evidence of two Moslem witnesses, even if they be the worst of men, though if it be utterly false, is sufficient to convict a Jew of the basest crimes, and subject him to the penalty. It will be easily seen," continues Mr. M., "how this can be used in furtherance of any wicked design, when it is considered that nothing more is required to make a Jew a Mahomedan but the evidence of two witnesses that he has repeated the Moslem confession of faith, 'There is no God but God, and Mahomet is his prophet.' The protestations of the victim are in vain; and if he persists in his denial, he is burnt to death."

These accusations are oftenest used to extort money, but where darker passions are at work, fearful tragedies are sometimes enacted. But to return to my tale.

Rica, when her guest had fairly departed, began to give way to the most frantic expressions of despair, tearing her clothes and beating her breasts until her alarmed daughters rushed in from the garden to learn the cause of her trouble, and all the women of the household crowded round, terrified by her cries, but to all their entreaties she answered only by renewed bursts of grief. The sight of Almah, for the first time in her life, brought a pang to her mother's heart, and she wished that God had made her less beautiful, since her beauty was likely to prove her deepest misfortune.

When Abraham Ben Yussuf returned from the bazaar he found his wife and daughters in tears. He had been more than usually fortunate that morning, and he had purchased with his gains bridal ornaments for his beloved Almah, and all the way home he had pleased himself in fancying her innocent delight, and the caresses she would bestow on him, when, as usual, she bounded like a fawn to greet him on his return home from the bazaar; and now how different was the reality to what he had pictured.

"What has happened," he said, advancing to the group of women, "that I find my wife and daughters weeping?"

"Nay, father," answered Almah, raising her face, and smiling through her tears, "Huldah and I only wept because we found our dear mother weeping; wherefore I know not."

"Send every one away," said Rica in a low voice to her husband, "I would speak with thee alone."

Ben Yussuf dismissed the women, and bestowing a fond caress on his fair daughters, sent them back to the garden, and he was alone with his wife.

Rica with many tears related to her husband the visit of Fatima, her proposal, and the threat she had uttered on its rejection, and the merchant, like his wife, foreboded evil, for he well knew the power a vindictive Moslem possessed over his unfortunate race, and he expressed his determination, as soon as his nephew returned, to celebrate Almah's nuptials as secretly as possible, instead, as he had intended, with



great public rejoicing, and send her away until Ali had overcome his ill-omened love. Almah and her sister were then re-called, and their mother confided to them her interview with Fatima and the resolve of their parents. She desired them to keep entirely within the house until Almah's bridal was over.

## CHAPTER IV.

ON leaving the dwelling of Rica, Fatima, unwilling to return home and acquaint her son with the ill success of her mission, hastened to the house of her daughter Zorayda, the youngest and favourite wife of the Cadi, or chief magistrate of Tangiers, to consult with her what measures she should take to force Almah to become the wife of her son, and revenge herself upon Rica for a refusal that had wounded both her pride and her natural vanity; since to refuse Ali, under any circumstances, was an insult that could never be forgiven.

Zorayda listened in silence to her mother's narrative. The fair Jewess had long been her favourite friend and companion, for Almah's beauty and gentleness made her universally beloved, and that she herself would be other than proud and flattered by becoming the wife of Ali she would not believe, since it would raise her position in the world much higher than she could ever have expected. She believed what she called the bigotry of Almah's parents alone to blame for any opposition that could be offered. She therefore considered they had only to get Almah away from them to win her to do all that they desired; therefore, by the time Fatima had finished what she had to tell, the

Cadi's wife had formed her plan, and she immediately imparted it to her mother. It was simply this. Two Mahomedan witnesses must be immediately procured to swear that they had heard Almah repeat the Moslem expression of faith ; it could be done that very day ; all the rest was easy.

Fatima clapped her hands with delight, while her daughter, in simple good faith that she was doing good to Almah, proposed this atrocious scheme ; and considering the relative positions of the two religions in Morocco, she may be pardoned for believing so.

Leaving to the Cadi's wife the task of procuring the necessary instruments to carry out her plan, Fatima returned home to gladden her son's heart with the announcement that the Jewess Almah should soon be his wife. The delight of Ali was unbounded, and at his mother's request he bathed and arrayed himself in his richest garments, and mounting his horse for the first time for many weeks, went forth to the great square to practise shooting at a mark, that being the general amusement of the youths of Tangiers. In the meantime Fatima went to the housetop to watch for the coming of the Cadi's officers. She had not to wait long.

Loud outcries and passionate wailings from the house of Ben Yussuf smote upon her ears. The screams of the unfortunate Rica, spite of herself, stung her with self-reproach, since she knew that through her the happiness of that home was for ever destroyed, but she consoled herself with the Moslem doctrine that

it was fate, and prepared to follow her victim to the Cadi's dwelling.

It is impossible to describe the scene in Ben Yussuf's house when the Cadi's officers told their errand. Rica fell into a deathlike swoon, while Huldah stood over her weeping, alike for mother and sister, and the servants, who loved their mistress and her children, filled the house with their lamentations. Almah alone was calm, though deadly pale, for although she rightly estimated the extent of her danger, she felt instinctively the necessity of controlling her feelings, and hers was one of those rare natures where the greatest courage and powers of endurance are concealed under an appearance of gentleness and timidity.

Ordinarily, when no principle was involved, Almah was yielding and submissive almost to a fault, and upon her knowledge of this the Cadi's wife counted for the success of her scheme. But passionately loving her parents and betrothed lover, and enthusiastic in her religious belief, as well as hating and scorning every denial of the truth, she was the last being on earth to yield herself up to Fatima and Zorayda's plans. Souls like hers in every age have swelled the ranks of martyrs.

When questioned by the Cadi respecting the charge against her, she firmly denied having even had the least idea of changing her religion, and declared that she had never seen until that moment the men who bore witness against her. The Cadi had no alternative even had he wished it. Two Moslem witnesses had

sworn against her. The law of the empire was plain, she must declare herself a Mahomedan or prepare for death by burning. He would send her to prison for a few days to give her time to consider ; that was all he could do.

Ben Yussuf, who had followed his beloved child to the Cadi's house, in vain offered immense sums for her ransom. He was driven away with curses and blows, and weeping and tearing his hair and beard, he went to the chief men amongst his people to concert with them some measures to accomplish the release of his unfortunate daughter, and their grief and dismay almost equalled his, since the misfortune that had befallen him might at any moment overtake them and their children also.

## CHAPTER V.

IN the meantime Ali had heard in the great square of Almah's arrest, and full of alarm he hastened to the Cadi's to enquire the cause. His fears were quieted by his mother and sister, who told him she would soon be released, and then they would make preparations for his bridal. That Almah would prefer the alternative of a terrible death to that of abjuring her religion and becoming the wife of Ali, neither of them would believe.

As soon as the excitement caused by the Jewish girl's arrest had somewhat subsided and evening had set in, Fatima and her daughter went to visit the captive, hoping to persuade her to yield to necessity and return home with them. Almah had been praying for strength to bear the trial so unexpectedly brought upon her, and that God would comfort her parents and sister, as well as her betrothed, for to her affectionate nature the thought of what they would suffer was her heaviest affliction. When Fatima and Zorayda entered her prison, at the sight of the women who were the cause of her suffering, Almah stood erect, while her cheek, before pale, became crimson, and her eyes flashed fire, but in answer to their salutations she answered not a word.

"My child is angry with me," said Fatima in her softest tones, "but will not Almah forgive the stratagem prompted by a mother's love, and return with me to the house where she will be welcome as the stream in the desert to the thirsty traveller. Ali longs for thy coming, daughter of my heart, and Zorayda would fain elasp thee in her arms and call thee sister, and I will be thy tender mother, and to-morrow shall see thee an honoured Moslem wife instead of a despised Jewess." Fatima had touched a tender chord, for at the word mother, pronounced by her lips, the thought of her own loving parents desolate and bereaved rushed so strongly upon Almah's mind that the tears she had until then restrained gushed forth like a torrent, and the prison was filled with the bitter sobs in which the anguish of her heart found vent, as she exclaimed, "Mother, ch, my own dear tender mother, when shall I behold thee again."

Moved also to tears by the sight of her grief, Zorayda now essayed to comfort her. "Come with us, Almah, dear Almah," she said, "we will replace tenfold all thou hast lost, and knowing thee happy, thy parents will soon be consoled."

"Never," answered Almah. "Oh, Zorayda, what had I done to thy mother that she should thus shatter at one blow all my life's happiness? Is it my fault that thy brother loved me? Have I ever sought his affection, and did you not know that I was as good as wedded? Zorayda, dear Zorayda, undo what thou hast done; thy husband is the Cadi; he loves thee, he

has power ; restore me to my parents, and I will leave Tangiers instantly, and go where the sight of me shall never vex Ali again, but do not ask me to renounce my God, since that is impossible."

Moved by her simple eloquence, Zorayda would have given worlds now to be able to comply with Almah's request, but she knew that strong as was her influence over her husband it could do nothing towards releasing Almah, since the accusation had been too publicly made. She was therefore silent. But Fatima, who cared little for the sufferings of Almah compared with what her son would feel at the disappointment of his fondest hopes, replied,

"What thou askest is impossible ; Almah, the Sultan himself could only give thee the choice to declare thyself a Moslem or to die. Why shouldst thou grieve ; is not the love of Ali a thing to be desired ; is he not known as the handsomest, the bravest, and the richest youth of Tangiers ? Instead of weeping thy heart should leap with joy. Arise then, leave this gloomy prison, and return with Zorayda to her home."

"Nay," said Almah, drying her tears, "never will I give my parents cause to curse the hour of my birth, never shall my betrothed weep over my faithlessness. Go, I can die if God so will it, but I cannot be the bride of Ali, and a renegade."

Enraged by what she termed her obstinacy, Fatima gave vent to her disappointment in curses and threats, but Zorayda again entreated her with the most endear-



ing epithets to recall her words 'ere it was too late, but Almah remained firm, and Fatima, hoping that a night in prison would help to soften her obduracy, forced her daughter away, leaving Almah to a solitude more welcome than her presence.

## CHAPTER VI.

DAYS and weeks went by, and Almah still remained in prison. Her parents and friends were forbidden to see her, and she was utterly without tidings from those she loved. But they were unceasing in their endeavours to procure her release. Her betrothed husband, her father, and all her people throughout Morocco, were making unheard-of efforts, lavishing immense sums upon all who were supposed to have any influence on her destiny, but in vain.

Money, usually so influential in all Mahommedan countries, failed here to procure from the Cadi leave for her unhappy parents to visit her, and at last Ezra Ben Yacub, her cousin and lover, set out for Fez, with the purpose of seeking from the Sultan's personal interference what he could not obtain from his officer, the deliverance of the hapless victim. In the meantime Fatima had daily visited the fair prisoner, and her rage and disappointment may be guessed when she found the Hebrew maiden deaf alike to her threats and entreaties, and as time flew by, and his beloved remained in prison, Ali made his mother's life burdensome by his reproaches, giving way to alternate fits of fury and despair, and swearing if Almah perished he would not survive her, and she now felt how useless was the

crime she had committed ; even Almah might have pitied the pangs that gnawed her heart.

Abraham Ben Yussuf had sent his remaining daughter to Gibraltar, and poor Rica was thus deprived of both her children. Weary, heartsick, and despairing, she passed her days and nights in weeping, and her husband had no comfort to give her. Suspense and trouble had done the work of years in both of them, and from being the finest looking amongst the Hebrews of Tangiers, they had become withered and old.

And how did poor Almah pass the weary days and nights ? Poor bird ! she drooped in her cage and pined for the free air and sunshine. Her life had been so happy before her imprisonment—she had been so loved and cherished that the contrast made her lot yet more bitter. The daily visit of Fatima was torture to her. In vain she asked her for tidings of her parents and sister ; she had no parents and sister, Fatima would answer, but Zorayda and herself ; and at length seeing how useless were all attempts to move her to pity, Almah ceased to speak to her at all, and Ibrahim's widow usually departed enraged with her hapless victim.

The hours of solitude were mostly spent by Almah in prayer ; sometimes a few natural tears would fall from her eyes, but her grief was too deeply seated for them to give her much relief. But when night came and with it sleep, her dreams took her back to her dearly loved home, and she was once more by the

fountain in the garden sporting with her sister, or forming plans for the future with one still dearer—plans, now, alas! never to be realized; and she would hear her father's voice blessing his darling, and feel her mother's fond caress. Then waking from such dreams to find herself alone in prison, she would stretch out her arms with heartrending cries for them to permit her mother to come and take her home. At other times she would recall to mind all that her parents had told her of those who had suffered death for their faith, and of the exiles from whom she was descended, who had left Spain for religion's sake, and of the thousands of martyrs to conscience who perished in all lands because they would not deny the God of Israel. She remembered, too, that once, when sitting at her father's feet and listening to such records, she had said that if it should ever be her lot to choose between death and apostacy, she would prefer death. How little did she dream then that she would have to seal her faith with her blood.

Ezra Ben Yacub at length returned from Fez, and with him one of the Sultan's officers armed with authority to remove the Hebrew maiden to that city, where the prince was then residing, and her parents also were commanded to repair there, and await the decision of Mulai Abd Erahmen. In vain Almah petitioned to be allowed to see her parents before she set out. All communication with them or any of her race was strictly forbidden.

Rica and Abraham dreaded the result of the journey,

for the Sultan's character was well known, and they felt that their daughter was for ever lost to them, as, even if permitted to live, it would only be as an inmate of the Sultan's harem, the toy of his pleasure.

The rage and jealousy of Ali passed all description when he heard that Almah was to be removed to Fez. In the bitterness of his heart he cursed his mother and sister, and Fatima was already reaping the reward of her wickedness, in the sufferings and despair of him for whom she had sinned.

## CHAPTER VII.

ALMAH had exchanged her prison in Tangiers for a gorgeous room in the palace of the Sultan at Fez. In spite of her attempts at resistance, the female slaves had dressed her in rich robes, and braided her raven hair with gems. Though pale and careworn, she was still surpassingly lovely. She had been the fairest amongst her own race at Tangiers, and all travellers concur in saying that there are no more beautiful women to be found anywhere than the young Jewesses of Morocco. A prey to alternate hopes and fears, she awaited the coming of the Sultan—the earthly arbiter of her destiny—and closing her eyes, she prayed most fervently to the God of Israel to incline his heart mercifully towards her. When she unclosed her eyes, the females had departed, and the Sultan, who had entered noiselessly, was standing beside her, and gazing upon her with looks that brought the crimson blood to her cheeks. In a moment Almah had cast herself at his feet, but Mulai gently raised her, and seating her on a pile of cushions, sat down beside her.

“And now,” said the Sultan, speaking in a low and gentle tone, “tell me, sweet maiden, why thou hast refused to confess thyself a true believer, although two

good Mussulmen have sworn to the fact that thou didst declare thyself as such. Fear not, but tell me all."

Thus addressed, Almah, with the simple dignity of truth, related all that she knew of her arrest and its cause, and her words and manner carried conviction to the mind of Abd Erahmen, he at once guessed the whole truth, that the witnesses had been suborned by Fatima and her daughter, and he believed fully poor Almah's narrative, but he knew the bigotry and intolerance of his people too well to think of releasing the Jewish maiden while she professed Judaism. Moreover, her youthful beauty pleased him, and he wished to retain her as an inmate of his harem; therefore, after some moments' deliberation, he said, "Fairest Almah, the laws of the empire are absolute; even I have no power to alter them. Having once professed thyself a Mahommedan, according to the oath of two witnesses, a Moslem thou must remain or die. But why shouldst thou, so young and fair, trouble thyself with points of doctrine? It is no longer Ali, the son of Ibrahim, who woos thee for his bride, but the Sultan of Morocco himself is at thy feet to offer thee life and love. Come, these are no hard terms I offer; it rests with thyself to end thy trouble. Nay," seeing she was about to speak, "thou shalt not decide now. The new moon began to-day; when it ends I will have thine answer. In the meantime thou hast but to speak, and thine every wish shall be fulfilled."

"My parents, may I see them," asked Almah in a

low and trembling voice, for she knew now that there was no hope for her.

Mulai hesitated, but remembering that in their natural affection he might find his best aid in moulding her to his wishes, he acceded to her request ; and promising to send immediately a messenger to seek them, left her alone to brood over the terrible fate that awaited her, for to live a life of infamy was so revolting to her pure mind that she never once dreamed of accepting the alternative. One only thought brought a gleam of joy to her—she would behold her beloved parents once again 'ere she parted from them for ever in this world.

A sound of coming feet—Almah rushed forward, while her heart beat loudly. Yes, he had kept his word. They were there at last, after all these weary weeks of waiting—her father and mother.

Barefooted, for no Jew in Fez was allowed to go otherwise, and no Jewess to wear her slippers in the precincts of the palace—covered with mud thrown upon them by a fanatic dervise, who had followed them with curses and revilings—careworn and prematurely old as I have said, the parents of Almah came to meet and embrace their unfortunate child. Almah rushed into her mother's arms, pressing passionate kisses on her eyes, cheeks, and brow ; then sprang to her father, hiding her face on his shoulder that he might not see her weep, and caressed him tenderly, stroking his beard with her hand as she had used to do in her happy childhood.



Rica sobbed aloud, and Abraham with difficulty restrained his emotion, that he might not add to her distress and that of Almah, who, after the first few minutes, felt her sorrow greater when she saw the ravages grief had made in the appearance of both her parents.

"My sister and Ezra, where are they?" asked Almah, speaking in Spanish, that no listening ear might overhear what was said; "where are they, are they safe and well?"

"Thy sister is far away from Morocco, but Ezra is with us in Fez," answered Rica. "Oh! Almah, his youth has departed from him with grief for thee, and his eyes have shed rivers of tears. He bade me tell thee that sleep scarcely visits his eyelids. Night and day he prays to God to preserve thee from all evil." Rica's voice was so broken she could scarcely proceed. "I promised Ezra to deliver a message to thee from him, but I will leave it to thee to decide. He says he loves thee so tenderly that to preserve thy life he would at any time lay down his own. He cannot endure the thought that thou shouldst die, so young and innocent, and he bids thee accept life on the Sultan's terms, whatever they be, since he says hereafter thou mayest escape to another land and return to the faith of thy people. But tell me, my heart's darling, what hath the Sultan said to thee, since we could learn nothing from his messenger, and remember I have simply delivered thy betrothed husband's wishes according to the promise I made him."

Almah repeated to her parents all that had passed between the Sultan and herself, and then asked, "Mother, what is thy counsel?"

"What can I say unto thee, my child?" moaned Rica. "Thy mother's heart is weak, her love, perchance, may make her betray her duty. Almah, Almah, ask me not, lest I kill thy soul to save thy body."

"And thou, my father," she turned to him as she spake, gently unclasping her mother's arms that were entwined around her, "what wouldst thou have thy daughter do?"

With an effort that almost rent his heart-strings, the father repressed a cry of anguish as she thus appealed to him, and for a moment it seemed as if the power of speech was taken from him, but at last he spake—"Better, oh, far better, my Almah, that thou shouldst die in thy innocence and beauty, than live a vile, polluted thing, soul and body alike, delivered up to the Islamite betrayer. Oh, Father of Israel," he continued, "teach us to bear thy will, and if this cup of bitterness may not pass from us, give thy weak children strength to endure without murmuring the burden thou hast laid upon them."

Rica uttered a low cry, for she felt that her husband's words had sealed the doom of her child, but Almah did not weep. Bestowing a tender caress on her hapless mother, she rose up, and meekly bowing her head, asked her father's blessing, saying, "fear not, father, the God of our ancestors will sustain me,"

then turning once more to her mother, she continued, "mother dear, dear mother, thou hast another child, and she will be thy comforter when I am gone. The worse once passed, thou wilt be happier in knowing that I am with my God. If I lived, my life would be shame to thee and misery to me. Now kiss and bless me and depart, since the sight of thy grief makes my trial more bitter."

Almah then kissed her mother on her lips and eyes, while Rica laid her hand upon her and fervently blessed her, and Abraham Ben Yussuf hid his face in the folds of his robe, that the women might not see the tears he could no longer restrain. After a few moments spent in the indulgence of their grief, in compliance with their daughter's request, they prepared to depart, but when on the threshold Rica rushed back again and again to embrace her child, and only the knowledge that she was in the palace of the Sultan restrained her from venting her anguish in loud screams.

When the parents of Almah reached the outer gate of the palace, a gaunt, emaciated wretch, with wild eyes, rushed forward and seized hold of Ben Yussuf.

"Almah," he cried, "what have you done with my Almah?" and Ben Yussuf's anguish was increased when he recognized the cause of all their sufferings—Ali, the son of Fatima.

Fearing his cries would bring a crowd about them, Ben Yussuf was obliged to stop and soothe the

distracted young man with promises of her speedy release.

Then with breaking hearts, he and his wife returned to the Jewish quarter.

## CHAPTER VIII.

ALMAH had passed a month in the harem of the Sultan. Threats, blandishments, and entreaties had been tried in vain to make her acknowledge herself a Moslem, and finding all endeavours to shake her noble constancy vain, Mulai Abd Erahmen had pronounced her sentence. One sole act of mercy had he granted her, if mercy it could be called. Instead of being burnt alive, her throat was to be cut, and her dead body afterwards to be consumed with fire. Almah heard her sentence calmly. Death was welcome to her, since she was wearied of the constant struggle she had endured since her imprisonment, and she believed her parents, when all was over, would suffer less than while her fate hung in the balance. She had seen them many times since the interview described, but their meetings and partings had been equally distressing to them all.

One lovely summer's morning, many of the Moslem inhabitants of Fez had assembled in the great square to witness the last act of the tragedy begun in Tangiers so long before. A pile had been erected in the centre to consume the body of the poor victim, and the executioner, a hideous negro, stood ready with his bare knife to take her innocent life. The Emperor's

negro guard surrounded Almah as she was led forth bareheaded and barefooted, with her long black hair streaming around her, and these dissolute men shed tears as the fair young girl, so meek and patient, was placed beside the executioner; even the fanatical crowd was touched by her youth and beauty, and stood silent. Then, with all the hideous paraphernalia of death around her, she was for the last time offered mercy if she would accept the faith of Mahomet.

Her reply was pronounced in a clear sweet voice that was heard distinctly in the hushed stillness of the crowd who pressed forward to hear. "I am not, and I never have been, a Mahommedan. False witnesses have sworn away my life. I die as I have lived, an Israelite." Then repeating aloud, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one God," she surrendered her throat to the knife, and as soon as she was dead her body was thrown on the blazing pile and consumed to ashes:

While this judicial murder had been going on, a fierce struggle had taken place on the edge of the crowd between a desperate man, who had striven to force his way to Almah's side, and some of the negro guard, but they dealt tenderly with him, as they knew that grief had driven him mad. He pleaded with all the eloquence of despair to die with his beloved, and when the terrible tragedy was consummated, he fell senseless to the ground.

After night-fall the executioner gathered together

the ashes of the maiden martyr, and sold them for an immense sum to her bereaved parents. They were buried at midnight in the Jewish cemetery, amid the tears and bitter lamentations of those who knew her sad story.

Her parents did not long survive her; and in compliance with their last request, her betrothed husband removed to Gibraltar, where Huldah had resided since the arrest of Alma, and wedded her.

Wandering about the city of Fez, there is still to be seen a harmless maniac, followed continually by a woman, whose attempts to prevail on him to come home with her he repulses with curses. These two are Fatima and her son Ali. Verily she had sown the wind to reap the whirlwind.

Not twenty years have passed since the fair young Jewish maiden sealed her faith with her blood. Hers is no fictitious character, since the leading events of the tale are strictly true.

# M O R D E C A I :

A TALE OF

THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY.





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BUT for the late persecution of the Jews of Damascus, and the yet impending fate of our unhappy brethren in Russia, we, who live under the protection of an equitable government, might be inclined to doubt the dreadful details handed down to us of the sufferings endured by our forefathers in the various countries of Europe during the middle ages. Driven successively from one kingdom to another, hunted like wild beasts from the homes they had begun to love and the graves where reposed the ashes of their fathers; well might the poet say of them—

“ Tribes of the wandering foot and weary breast,  
How shall ye flee away and be at rest;  
The wild bird hath her nest, the fox his cave,  
Mankind their country,—Israel but a grave!”

In one of the streets near the Jews' Synagogue, in

St. Mary's Axe then, and at the present known by the name of Bevis Marks, in the year 1290, during the reign of King Edward I., dwelt a Jewish Rabbi, celebrated for his learning and piety.

The family of the Rabbi consisted of his wife, daughter, grandson, an orphan girl whom they had reared through charity, and a boy about 14 years of age, whose blue eyes, light hair, and fair complexion, showed his Saxon origin.

A few years previous to the commencement of our tale, family misfortunes had compelled the Rabbi Mordecai to leave the home of his fathers, the lovely land of Spain, and to seek refuge in England. Here the fame of his learning procured him the situation of Reader to the Synagogue, near which his house was situated.

Age and suffering had left their marks stamped upon the brow of the Rabbi, while his wife, of a more bouyant temperament, showed fewer marks of their ravages ; and in her unceasing affection, he found a solace for his sorrows, and an assistance in his toils. Their daughter Estella, was a spirit-bowed woman, whose face bore marks of a premature blight that had fallen on her heart ; she shared in an eminent degree her father's piety and firm trust in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Wise, prudent, and instructed by the Rabbi, whose only child she was, in the sublime truths of our holy religion, it was to Estella that her father looked as friend and adviser in times of peril.

Rachel, the orphan girl already mentioned, was betrothed to the son of Estella.

One other person remains to be described—the fair-haired boy, the knowledge of whose history was confined to Mordecai alone. All that his family knew of Albert was, that he was a Christian whom chance had thrown upon the Rabbi's protection, and whom it was necessary for his own sake to keep unknown, as the knowledge that he was still in existence might prove fatal to his safety. Circumstances had rendered Albert thoughtful beyond his years. Debarred from all society but that of the Rabbi's family, of the world without he knew nothing. His sole pleasure was in receiving instruction from Mordecai; but at times when the Rabbi, who dearly loved the desolate boy, would, to please him, recount histories of the warriors of old, or the more recent achievements of Richard I. and King Edward in Palestine, then his eyes would light up and his countenance assume a joyous expression, and he sighed when he heard the wise Mordecai stigmatise those wars which had begun since the days of William Rufus as unholy battles, commenced in folly and fanaticism, and ending in vain conquests lost as soon as gained. "The Mussulmen and Christians may struggle for the Holy Land," he would say, "and destroy each other in their blood-thirstiness; but it is to the exiled Jews alone that the Holy Land of right belongs, and to them in His own good time will the Guardian of Israel restore it." Religion, except as far as the Holy Scriptures went, the Rabbi never taught the

boy, but he impressed upon his ductile mind those lessons of universal toleration which were little known and less practised in that age or country.

The Jews of England, at the period of which we write, groaned under a yoke as grievous as that of their forefathers in Egypt, and every day multiplied the acts of cruelty and oppression which the bigotry and intolerance of Edward Plantagenet loaded them. Fines, confiscations, and exile daily took place amongst them, and the unfortunate Israelites found that fraud and force were alike employed to induce them to abjure their religion, but in vain, for the spirit of endurance and faith was firm in them, and they opposed to their persecutors that passive courage for which the sons of Israel have been famed in all ages—a courage nobler because founded on higher principles than resistance by force of arms. But it was for this that the fierce Barons of England, whose law and religion were the sword, despised and trampled upon the unhappy beings whose helplessness and reputed wealth made them so desirable a prey. We say reputed wealth, because a long series of oppressive exactions on the part of the Plantagenet kings had left the Jews but a remnant of their former opulence, and even that remnant the king and church looked upon with greedy eyes; so that it was doubtful how long they might remain in possession of the little that was left them. It was the eve of the festival of Pentecost, and the Rabbi's family were in the Synagogue at prayer, when Albert, who had been left in

quiet possession of the dwelling, was startled by a loud knocking at the outer door. Knowing that the Rabbi and his family could not yet have returned, the boy, with some alarm, prepared to answer the summons. The person who claimed admission in so clamorous a manner was an armed man, having a written order from the king to the Rabbi Mordecai. Albert's heart misgave him, for he feared, and with justice, fresh evil to his kind protectors; and when the soldier departed, it was with a sad foreboding that he awaited the return of the family.

Albert suffered the blessings and the meal to go on as usual, but that over, he beckoned the Rabbi on one side, and briefly narrated the soldier's mission. With a trembling hand Mordecai took the parchment and read its contents; his looks of alarm and horror at once aroused the fears of his family, although they waited in respectful silence until it was his will to acquaint them with the cause of his anguish. For some time Mordecai remained contemplating the summons of the King; and when he at length spoke, it was in a voice so hoarse and broken that all were terrified before they understood the purport of his words.

"Behold," he said, "the missive of the tyrant," and he placed it in the hands of his grandson; "not content with robbing us of our earthly possessions, this cruel and bloodthirsty oppressor would rob us of the consolations of religion also. He hath sent a summons to me and my congregation to attend in the

Dominican convent in Whitechapel, to-morrow, the preaching of the Father Eustace, a bigoted fanatic, and a bitter persecutor of the remnant of Israel."

A wild cry of horror and despair broke from the Rabbi's family at this fearful announcement, and Esther threw herself into the arms of her husband, exclaiming, "Oh! why did we ever leave our own beautiful Spain to come into this accursed country?"

Estella burst into tears. "It was for my sake," she exclaimed, "and my child's, that ye, my beloved parents, braved the dangers of the sea, and the perils of this barbarous country. Oh! would that I had died in the hour when sorrows first came upon me,—then might the remnant of your days have been passed in peace and security."

"Nay, Estella, grieve not thus," answered the Rabbi, drawing her fondly towards him, and laying his feeble hand on her brow. "What is written is written, and man vainly strives in his short-sighted wisdom to set aside the decrees of Providence. It is to try and to prove the purity of our faith that we are here, and let us not shrink in the first moment of danger from firmly upholding that faith, though in doing so we exchange a life of trouble and suffering for a glorious immortality."

"Weep not," continued the old man, raising his weeping wife from his bosom, "it is to thee our children look for support in this hour of trial; set them not the example of faint-heartedness."

"And wilt thou obey this summons, my father?"

Estella said, striving to imitate the firmness of Mor-decai.

“My child,” replied the Rabbi, “for three-score years and ten have I already endured the burden of life; and, whenever it be the Almighty’s will, I am ready to resign it. Forty years have I been a teacher of Israel; and during the whole of that time it has been my study to expound the word of God unto my flock, and teach them to reverence His laws, to live in their practice, and not to forsake the holy truths if they should even be called upon to die for maintaining them; and shall I now, because danger threatens, be the first to abandon those precepts which I have taught? Thou, mine own darling, when thou wert called upon to forsake the law of God, by one whom thou hadst dearly loved, the husband of thy youth, to preserve thy child from the crime of his father, fleddest from the house, where thou hadst enjoyed life’s joys and wealth, to brave every hardship for thy religion’s sake; hast thou not toiled with the labour of thy hands, thou who from thy cradle wert accustomed to every splendour; and shall thy old father, who could for his child’s sake seek voluntary exile, refuse to do that for his God which his earthly affections prompted him to dare? Arouse once more thy courage and endurance, my Estella, and comfort thy unhappy mother in the hour of her trial. To-morrow is our holy festival, and I perform the services in the Synagogue, as it is written, though it be the last time I glorify the name of God on earth.”



"Oh, Mordecai," shrieked Esther, "peril not thy life, and leave me a widow in a strange country ; think of thy desolate daughter, her orphan child, and Jacob, Rachel—oh, who will protect and comfort us if thou art taken from us?"

"Esther," replied the Rabbi, "if I perish, the Husband of the Widow, and the Father of the Fatherless, even He who dwelleth in the high heavens, will guard those whom earthly friends have forsaken ; then murmur not at His decrees, but teach thy children to bless and glorify His name ; and forbear," he added sternly, seeing she was about to speak, "to show the example of weakness to those who ought to find support in thee in the path of righteousness, and let them not behold thee as a backslider who falls off at the first appearance of danger. As for me, I will put my trust in the Rock of Ages, and neither fear nor interest shall draw me from my duty."

Esther's habitual submission to the will of her husband kept her silent, and the Rabbi, motioning his daughter to follow him, led the way to the apartment solely dedicated to his use.

"Come hither, Estella," he said, "as he closed the door carefully, "in thy fortitude and courage I know I can place confidence ; and as this may be the last opportunity I may ever have of speaking to my child, I would confide to thee the history of the Christian boy so strangely thrown upon my care. I will not conceal from thee, Estella, that possibly to-morrow will bring death upon thy father and many of the

persecuted remnant of Israel; thy beloved mother, so timid and gentle, will have but thee as a support in her helplessness. Then perchance the bread that I have cast upon the waters will return unto thee, and the protection and love I have shown to this child be repaid to my wife and children. Be careful and prudent, Estella, in the use of the knowledge I am about to confide in thee; but, above all, peril not the safety of the boy."

Then, seeing Estella did not speak, he continued—  
"Albert is of noble, nay, of royal blood, for by his mother's side he is nearly related to the cruel King who sways the sceptre of England, and his sire, Reginald de Lacy, was one of the bravest and most powerful of the Baron's confederates against the late King Henry. For this, and some offence against the present King, he was banished the kingdom six years ago, and forced to leave his wife and child, whilst his lands were given to his cousin, Walter de Lacy. In his eagerness to secure himself in the possession of the wealth thus acquired, the new Earl attempted to secure the persons of the countess and her son. The death of the former, through grief at the exile of her husband, defeated one part of this plan, and the other has been hitherto frustrated by the Providence that conducted this relation of Plantaganet to the dwelling of a Jew. It is now five years since, walking one night in melancholy mood by the side of the river that washes this great city, I was aroused from a sad reverie by a low moan, followed by a cry

for help in the feeble voice of a child. Yielding rather to the impulse of the moment than the dictates of prudence, I mended my steps, and near the ruins of what had once been a dwelling-house I beheld a man stretched on the ground and weltering in his blood. A boy about eight or nine years old, who was weeping bitterly, knelt by his side, striving with his trembling hands to staunch the blood which was flowing from a ghastly wound in the throat. At the sound of my footsteps, the wounded man raised his head, and entreated assistance for himself and protection for the child. I placed his head on my knee, and carefully bound the wound, which was shortening his life. Whilst in the act of rendering him this little help, I saw his eye rest on the badge I wore, and he recoiled with horror when he found I was a Jew. The sense of danger, however, and the consciousness that both he and the child must have perished if left to themselves, conquered his repugnance, and in a voice which was becoming fainter and fainter from exhaustion, he implored me not to leave him. The boy, who had ceased to weep, stood pale and trembling by the wounded man, and now, in low, sweet accents, entreated me not to let his good Gilbert die, as his mother had done, and leave him alone in the wide world with no one to love him. The child's grief touched my heart, but an examination into the state of Gilbert convinced me that he had but a short time to live, and of this I warned him, taking care that the boy, whose artless affection in-

terested me, should not overhear what I said. A convulsive spasm passed through the frame of the sufferer at this intelligence, and he muttered what appeared to be a prayer for a few moments, then snatching the boy to his bosom, he exclaimed, "The saints protect thee, poor boy. Thy mother dead, thy father an exile, thy faithful Gilbert dying, who is there now to care for thee?"

"He shall not need a protector while I have the means of sheltering him," I exclaimed, forgetting every consideration in pity for the desolate orphan.

"Alas!" answered Gilbert, "a Jew, a stranger, one of an accursed race, thou become the guardian of de Lacey's heir? Yet what better can I do for thee, child of my love? Could I but have seen thee safe in the arms of thy father, that life would have been well bestowed which insured the safety of my liege Lord. Now Reginald de Lacey, in exile and suffering, will learn from strangers the loss of all he loves."

While Gilbert spoke, the boy, who comprehended from the words of his faithful friend that he was about to leave him, burst into tears, and begged not to be left alone.

"Let me die with you, Gilbert," he said, "let me die with you. Oh! leave not your Albert as my own dear mother left me."

Albert's emotion proved fatal to the faithful Gilbert, for in striving to raise himself to comfort the boy, his wounds burst out afresh.

"Jew," he said, "desert not the child; remember he is a Christian, and the heir of de Lacy, whose foes seek his innocent life, but do thou protect him till the cloud hath passed from the fortunes of de Lacy." His voice died away in a hollow murmur, and striving with a last effort to embrace the child he loved, he fell back and died.

I searched the body and found a letter addressed to Earl de Lacy, a case of jewels, and a few gold pieces; then [lifting Albert, whom grief had rendered speechless, in my arms, I regained my dwelling as quickly as possible. Since then this Christian boy, as thou knowest, has been an inmate of my house, and I love him as my own child. All the tidings I have been able to learn of his sire are that he fought for many years in the Holy Land; but as his cousin lately died without any heirs, it is rumoured that the banished Earl will regain his inheritance. If it be so, Estella, and I perish, do thou restore the child to his parent; and in return for all I have done for him, doubtless this Christian noble will protect my helpless family. In my cedar chest thou wilt find the letter and the case of jewels I have mentioned. Preserve them carefully until thou canst restore them to their rightful owners.

Estella had listened in respectful silence to the recital of her father, but when he concluded she threw herself on the neck of her parent and wept.

"Nay, my child," said Mordecai, pressing her to his

heart, "afflict not thyself needlessly ; the issue of this affair is in the hands of God, and to his will we must submit. Peace be with thee, I go to acquaint our brethren with the decree of the tyrant."

## CHAPTER II.

THE congregation of the Rabbi Mordecai received the tidings he brought them with sorrow, but without surprise. They had been so repeatedly victims to the tyranny of the Plantagenet kings that they had become used to sufferings. Under the belief that their miseries could not admit of increase, they bore this new invasion of their rights as men, and with the firmness of those who have nothing more to fear, having already made up their minds to the worst.

"Fear not, Mordecai," said Ephraim, the chief elder of the congregation, when they met in the Synagogue, "we can die at least as our fathers have done for our religion; there are none here whom fear of death or love of gold will induce to forsake the faith of Abraham, or the law of Moses."

Nevertheless it was with dread that the Jewish assembly in St. Mary Axe commenced the service in the morning of the Pentecost, and even the Rabbi, noble-hearted and firm as he was, shuddered when he remembered what that day might bring upon all.

In the midst of their service a loud cry of terror suddenly disturbed the worshippers; the door of the Synagogue was forced open, armed men surrounded the Hebrews on all sides; to resist was impossible.

The Rabbi, his grandson, and his flock were seized by the lawless soldiery; the books of the law were thrown down and trampled upon, the veil torn from the ark, and the place so lately filled with the voices of prayer and praise, now resounded with the blasphemies of the licensed robbers, who slaked their thirst for blood and rapine under the mask of religion. The Rabbi and his congregation were greeted with curses and revilings on all sides, as their rude conductors hurried them through the streets to the Dominican convent, and when they reached the gate of this edifice they were forced into the chapel in which Friar Eustace awaited their coming.

For two hours without intermission the unhappy Jews were compelled to listen to the preaching of the fierce bigot, who alternately threatened or attempted to cajole them to forsake the religion which was dearer to their hearts than life or liberty, but in vain did Friar Eustace exhaust his eloquence. The Israelites listened without reply, but the shrewd friar easily discerned that his arguments were of little avail against the firmness of those with whom he had to contend.

After a consultation with his superior, Friar Eustace determined on suffering the Jews to depart, with the exception of the Rabbi, whom it was settled should remain until by fraud, force, or persuasion, he could be induced to change his religion, and by his example teach his flock to become converts to the Christian faith.



Rabbi Mordecai was conducted by one of the monks to a dreary cell, into which he was thrust, and left for some hours to his own sad reflection.

With a heavy heart, Jacob, the Rabbi's grandson, returned to his own house with the tidings of the captivity of his grandsire. At the sound of Jacob's step, the females, who had passed the morning in prayer, sprung eagerly towards him, but when they found he was alone, one wild exclamation burst from the lips of all.

"Is the Rabbi dead?"

"Not dead, but a captive," replied the young man mournfully, "a captive in the convent of the Dominican friars;" and Jacob briefly related the events of the morning.

It were vain to attempt the description of the grief that overwhelmed the Rabbi's family during the remainder of the festival, for they well knew that imprisonment or death would be Mordecai's portion, unless they were able to offer a sum of money for his ransom sufficient to extort from the avarice of the monks that mercy which it was useless to hope from their justice. But where was this money to be obtained? On the emigration of Mordecai's family from Spain, their departure had been so sudden and secret that a certain amount and some valuable jewels had been all they could take with them in their flight. During the first year of their residence in England this little store was exhausted, and consequently they had no resource but the small income of

the Rabbi, derived from the poor congregation, and which would have been insufficient for the support of the family but for the money earned by Estella and Rachel, who worked at embroidery, in which the latter was particularly skilful. From others of their tribe the family knew it was in vain to ask any help whatever. The most wealthy and respectable of the English Jews had already either left the kingdom altogether, or remitted the wreck of their former substance to relatives or friends in foreign countries on whom they could rely. The rest were bowed down by terror at the heavy tributes imposed upon them; therefore the release of poor Mordecai appeared hopeless.

Many were the conferences Estella held with her son and his betrothed, for such was the relation in which Rachel stood towards him, respecting the measures to be adopted for insuring the safety of the venerable man who was so dear to them all; and to these discussions Albert at length claimed admittance.

"I am," said he, "the child of the Rabbi's bounty. When the men of my faith and kindred sought my life, he watched over my safety, he whose religion I had been taught to hate;—he took in the desolate Christian boy, he taught him all that was wise and good in his own religion, without striving to weaken his faith in the worship of his fathers. And have I not a claim to aid in his release, a right to love him? Estella, I am young and strong; I am a Christian, therefore none have a right to grasp at the produce of

my labour; let me also work to obtain the release of my second father."

"Alas! poor boy, what canst thou do save expose thyself and us to danger? No, no, Albert; add not to our affliction by braving the chance of destruction to thyself in the vain hope of aiding my unfortunate father."

The boy could only answer this argument by entreaties that Estella would show him some way in which he could be useful to the Rabbi.

"Thou art a Christian, Albert," said the Rabbi's daughter, when on the fourth day of his imprisonment the boy eagerly repeated his petitions. "Thou art a Christian, therefore there will be no danger in venturing to the Dominican convent and striving to obtain intelligence of my father."

Albert eagerly accepted the commission, and with a heavy heart Estella saw him depart on his errand, and then hastened to her mother.

Esther, naturally delicate, and accustomed to rely upon her husband and daughter in cases of emergency, was so completely prostrated in mind from the unexpected blow which had fallen upon her as to be as helpless as a child, and Estella's grief was greatly aggravated by the situation of her mother.

In the meantime, the position of Mordecai was becoming daily more unsupportable. Sincerely attached to his religion from principle, there was little danger of the Rabbi changing it, but his bodily sufferings during the time of his imprisonment had proved too

much for his enfeebled frame; and, at the time of Albert's visit to the convent, Mordecai was laid upon a bed of sickness, and compelled to listen to the exhortations of the zealous monks who took their station by turns at his side, leaving the wretched man no respite from mental or bodily suffering. The more obstinate they found their prisoner in retaining his faith, the more violent and relentless the Dominicans became; and at length, finding their persuasions of no avail, they determined to try the effect of force, and this resolution was taken on the evening of the day we have mentioned.

At the convent the only intelligence Albert could obtain was that the Rabbi was ill; and, moreover, little likely to obtain any freedom save that of the grave.

He found Jacob, the Rabbi's grandson, keeping watch by his aged grandmother, Estella and Rachel having left the house on a mission connected with their employment as embroideresses.

"It was for my sake," said Jacob, dejectedly, when the boy had delivered his tidings; "it was for my sake that my mother's father left the lovely land where we were wealthy and happy to brave the perils of this barbarous country, and even, when his life is in danger, and gold, gold alone, can rescue him from the clutches of the savage monsters who commit robbery and murder in the name of the Most High, I have not the least power to aid him, and can but sit and weep like a woman, when I would fain be up and doing like a

man. Oh," he continued, clasping his hands together, "oh, that my brethren had hearts like their fathers, to conquer back the right to be treated as human beings, or, at least, to die like men, instead of being led like sheep to the slaughter. But who shall speak now of the valiant men of Israel, or awaken a spark of courage in their hearts? Yet why should I blame them? for, alas, we have now neither homes nor altars round which we can rally; the hand of every man is against us, and we have no means of opposing them, for the remnant of Israel is but as a grain of sand in the eyes of the mighty ones of the earth."

While Jacob thus gave vent to his feelings, Albert stood revolving in his mind a thousand schemes for the deliverance of the Rabbi, each of which he was forced to give up in turn as utterly impracticable.

### CHAPTER III.

AMONGST the most favoured of the courtiers of Edward Plantagenet was a noble knight but lately returned from the Holy Land, where he had gained high renown by fighting against the Saracens. Reginald de Lacy had been banished in the early part of King Edward's reign through the machinations of his cousin, who had cast an envious eye on his inheritance, and it was not until the death of that relative that the King at length rendered justice to de Lacy, by recalling him to his court, and restoring once more the estates that of right belonged to him. Besides this, Edward, anxious to obliterate from the Earl's mind the remembrance of the past, loaded him with favours, and kept him constantly near his person.

But though Edward of England could restore to Reginald de Lacy the estates of which he had been deprived, he could not restore from the grave his beloved wife, and give him tidings of his lost child; and de Lacy wandered about amongst the gay courtiers like a man in a dream, giving himself up almost wholly to the grief that clouded his declining life.

But one tie yet remained to reconcile him to existence—this was a daughter by a former marriage, named Maude. This beautiful girl had just left the

convent in which she had found a secure asylum during her father's absence, and was about to wed a young noble to whom she had long been attached.

Maude was a beauty, and capricious, and she quickly saw the ascendancy she had gained over her father's heart. Her slightest whim was law to him, and none of her wishes remained ungratified.

It chanced that Maude had seen at one of the Queen's balls a lady who had lately returned from Palestine with her husband. She wore a robe richly embroidered in the Eastern style with gems and gold. Maude thought that she had never beheld anything more beautiful than this dress, and on her return inquired amongst her maidens for one skilful enough to work a robe like Lady Mowbray's. But no English maiden would undertake the task. At length one of her tirewomen, who had employed Rachel frequently, suggested that the Jewish maiden could embroider a robe equally beautiful as the one Lady Maude so earnestly desired.

De Lacy, who was present at this discussion, forbade his daughter to have any dealing with the people whom he hated; for he had been bred up in all the stern bigotry of the times, and he shrank from Maude's holding any intercourse with the race he held as accursed; but when did a young and lovely woman fail to gain a point on which she had set her heart?

Wearied out by his daughter's importunities, de Lacy at length gave a reluctant consent that she

should employ Rachel to work her robe, and teach her maidens the art so much prized.

Accordingly, the tirewoman of Lady Maude sought out Rachel, and made her acquainted with her errand. Gladly did Rachel undertake the task, which she hoped might raise her up friends amongst the rich and powerful; and accompanied by Estella, she set out for the stately dwelling of de Lacy.

Maude had waited impatiently for the coming of the Jewess; and when she at length entered, she was greeted by her with more kindness and less of scorn than she had ever yet received from a Christian maiden.

The beauty of the Jewess pleased her, and the sadness depicted in Rachel's countenance moved her pity.

"Is this maiden thy child, Jewess," she said, turning to Estella; "if so, name thou the reward thou wilt expect for her task."

"Nay," said Rachel, interrupting Estella, who was about to speak; "I name no reward until my task is finished, and then I must name my own price for my toil."

"Be it so, maiden," answered Maude, smiling; "Bridget will instruct thee in thy work."

Day after day Rachel sought the habitation of Lady Maude. Naturally timid and sensitive, she suffered much from the haughty contempt she encountered amongst the attendants of Maude—beings as inferior to herself in intellect as they were superior to her in their position in life; but the remembrance that she



entered on a task for a high and noble purpose nerved her heart. The thought of the Rabbi, and the hope that the child of his bounty should prove the humble instrument of his release, aroused all her courage, and with a pale cheek, but a hopeful heart, she persevered in her task, unheeding the mockery of the English girls, to whom her Jewish origin, and the badge which Edward had forced women as well as men to assume was an unfailing subject of scorn and mirth; and when, with weary eyes and aching heart, she returned in the evening to the Rabbi's house, she would hide from Estella all she had suffered through the day, and dwell upon the kindness of Maude, who ever had a sweet smile and a kind word for the Jewish maiden.

A month had gone by since the Rabbi had been imprisoned, during which time he had suffered torture more than once; but his unbending spirit had supported him in the trial, and even while under the hands of the torturers he had repeated the confession of faith—"Hear, O Israel! the Lord our God is one God." Nor could threats or entreaties win from him any other declaration. At length, wearied out by his firmness, and fearing that their victim could not survive any further cruelty, the monks thrust the unfortunate Rabbi into a miserable dungeon, and left him to solitude.

With difficulty the Rabbi crawled to a heap of straw that composed his bed, and throwing himself upon it, said, "Thy will, not mine, be done, O Lord. Yet how pleasant it would be to lay down this weary

load of life. Shall I never behold the wife of my bosom and beloved children again? Alas, I fear we have parted for ever, and better would it be for me if my persecutors would end this fearful trial by destroying this wretched existence."

"Jew, it rests with thyself to exchange this hard couch for a bed of down, and this prison-cell for a stately palace," said a voice beside him, which Mordecai knew to be that of the prior of the convent; "abjure the accursed errors of thy people, and take upon thee our holy and blessed faith, and the remainder of your days will be spent in peace and enjoyment."

"Friar," said the old man, his voice trembling with emotion, "listen to me. I have already told thee how vain are promises or threats to win me from the law of God delivered through his servant Moses. Cruelty hast thou tried: these aged limbs have been stretched upon the rack until my fainting frame could endure no more, and yet ye could not extort from me a denial of my faith. Now hearken unto me, and I will show how vain it is for thee to attempt to win me to thy will by promises. When I was yet a boy, my father died, and left me a splendid heritage in my own lovely land of Spain. The enjoyments of thy northern lands are but hardships compared to the beauties of the south, and the highest of these luxuries it was my fortune to enjoy. I wedded, and was happy in my marriage: my time was passed in the study of the law and the sweet delights of home. I had one child, a

daughter, whom it was my pride to educate in wisdom and virtue. She wedded, and became a mother. Estella loved her husband with her whole heart, but the allurements of rank and princely favour were too great for the virtue of Asher to resist. He became an apostate, and wished to persuade my child to his faith; but Estella preferred her religion to her husband—she was divorced from him, and returned broken-hearted to her father's roof, accompanied by her child. Of this child her husband wished to gain possession, to rear him in his new creed. Then I left home, country, wealth, and kindred; I braved exile and poverty to preserve the faith and soul of my child's child: thinkest thou that I am to be tempted now?"

The friar, stern as he was by nature and education, was moved by the emotion of the old man and his self-devotion; he saw at once how useless it would be to make further attempts on the religion of the Rabbi. Admiring the dauntless spirit, so like his own, which supported Mordecai, he left the dungeon without further reply, but gave instant order for the removal of the Jew to a comfortable cell, and that one of the friars, who was a skilful surgeon, should attend to his broken and suffering limbs, and such food should be supplied to him as his religion permitted him to partake of.

## CHAPTER IV.

RACHEL returned one evening to the dwelling of the Rabbi with a lighter heart than usual. The robe was finished, and the delighted Maude had bidden her to name her reward on the morrow for the execution of her task.

Rachel's gay mood was quickly changed into mourning when she entered the dwelling of the Rabbi.

Estella was weeping bitterly, and her son, the betrothed husband of the maiden, was pacing the apartment with rapid strides, while broken ejaculations and half-stifled sobs broke forth from his lips at intervals.

Rachel sprang to the side of Estella, exclaiming "The Rabbi?"

"We have heard naught of my father," answered Estella; "but, alas, ours are not the only sorrowful hearts amongst our people. The King"——

"What of him?" said the alarmed maiden.

"He hath issued an order," replied Estella, "that in three weeks from this day every Jew shall leave his kingdom; all property, save sufficient to defray our passage to another country, is to be forfeited to the King; and thus stripped of even the means to support life, our people must seek in the wide world another

home. Those who remain beyond the time named in the edict are to become the slaves of whatever tyrant shall have strength to seize them."

"And will my people bear this wrong? Will they submit without a struggle?" asked the terrified maiden. "Will they not try to force more equitable terms from the tyrant who forgets the claims of justice and humanity?"

"Alas, my child," said Estella, "if our brothers, urged to despair, had recourse to the sword, what chance would men whose lives have been devoted to the arts of peace have against these hard-hearted Barons, whose trade is blood, and whose frames, like their hearts, are of iron? No, no, Rachel; it is on the Guardian of Israel only that we can rely—earthly help will avail us nothing. Let us pray, my beloved children, to the Lord of Hosts for strength to endure His will, and bow in submission to His decree."

On the morrow, Rachel, accompanied by Estella, once more returned to the dwelling of the Earl de Lacy.

It was now more than ever necessary to procure the release of the Rabbi, if possible, for to leave the country while his fate remained uncertain was worse than death itself.

Lady Maude was indisposed, but she gave instant orders for the admission of the Jewess. Maude was reclining on a couch, and her fond father sat beside her, gazing into her face with an intensity of affection which only those who have been compelled by the hard

band of adverse fortune to cast all their affections on one dear object can imagine.

Lady Lacy smiled kindly as the Jewesses advanced nearer in obedience to the motion of her hand.

"And so, Rachel," she said, "thou art come to name the well-earned reward of thy labour for the last month. Well, thou shalt not find Maude de Lacy a niggard. But how is this? Thine eyes are heavy as with weeping—thy cheek is pale too, and marked with traces of tears. If I can do aught which a Christian maiden may do to relieve thy distress, ask fearlessly, and fear no denial."

"Lady," replied the young Hebrew, "hast thou not heard that the sentence of banishment is passed against my people? They will have to seek a new home on a foreign shore, without being even allowed to take with them the means of subsistence in another land. Is this not enough for mourning?"

"And thou, too, my poor girl," said Maude, sorrowfully, "must thou also follow thy people in exile and poverty? Oh, rather cast off the errors of unbelief, and Maude de Lacy will protect thy fortunes—shall it not be so? My father," she continued, turning to de Lacy, "shall we not give this desolate outcast a home?"

"As thou wilt, Maude," replied the fond father; "and if this Jewess be willing to renounce her errors she will not lack friends."

"I thank thee, noble lady," answered Rachel, with dignity, "but I will live and die with my people and

in my faith; yet I will ask a boon of thee, as a reward for my humble services, and in granting my request thou wilt bestow more than life or wealth upon thy supplicant."

"And what might this petition be, damsel," said Maude, "which thou dost beg so earnestly. Gold, I well know, is what thy tribe hunger most commonly after, but thy words seem to imply more pressing need. Speak, what can I do for thee?"

Rachel's face became ghastly, and her whole frame trembled, while Estella, even more agitated, clung to the orphan for support, for each felt that the decisive moment was at hand which was to decide the fate of the Rabbi; and when Rachel at last spoke, her voice was almost inaudible from strong emotion.

"Lady," she said, "of gold I have no need, for that which thou wouldst give would but go to fill the treasury of King Edward; but there is an aged man, a teacher of Israel, at present a prisoner in the Dominican Convent in Whitechapel, and it is his release I would procure as the reward of my labour. Oh! do not deny me," she added imploringly, "thou knowest not how much misery thy refusal would bring upon me."

Maude shook her head sorrowfully. "Poor maiden," she said, "thou demandest that which it is impossible for me to grant. Ask some other boon."

"Alas! alas! none other has any value in my eyes. That aged man, when my parents' death left me an orphan and destitute, took me into his dwelling, and

from that hour until his captivity he treated me as if I were his own child. Then, oh, if thy handmaid has found favour in thy sight, save him, save him, my more than father."

As Rachel spoke, she threw herself at the feet of Maude, and with clasped hands and streaming eyes awaited her answer.

Maude glanced imploringly towards her father, and de Lacy, moved by the earnest pleading of the young girl, advanced a step towards her, and said—

"It is dangerous to interfere with those whom Mother Church claims as her own. Had thine adversary been other than the Holy Church itself, thou shouldst not lack aid of Reginald de Lacy."

"Reginald de Lacy!" said Estella, who had not before spoken; "the noble Earl whom King Edward banished, seven years since, and whose cousin Walter obtained possession of his lands and estates?"

"In the name of all the saints in Heaven," exclaimed the Earl, much agitated, "what has this to do with thee?"

"Much, much, it concerneth both me and thee," answered Estella. "Did not thy wife die while thou wert in exile, leaving behind her a son whose fate is unknown to thee, and thou wouldst give all in thy possession once more to press him in thy arms?"

"Woman! devil! sorceress! from whom knowest thou this?" shouted De Lacy. "Speak! tell me of my boy, my noble boy, is he living in safety?"

The wildness of the Earl's tone, and the excitement



of his manner, at once convinced Estella that she beheld in him the father of the child whom the Rabbi had so generously protected, and fervently did she thank the Allwise Disposer of events for the knowledge so strangely acquired, and which she trusted would assure the safety of her beloved father.

These thoughts passed rapidly through her mind while de Lacy waited her answer, as if the award of life or death rested on her words.

"Earl de Lacy," said the Jewess, "thy son is alive and in safety; he is all that a fond father can desire in the heir to his proud titles, but tortures shall not force further intelligence from me, until thy knightly word is passed that thou wilt do all that rests in the power of man to obtain the release of my father, and his safe departure from this kingdom. That done insures the restoration of de Lacy's heir."

"I swear to thee by every saint in heaven——"

"Nay, I need not oaths, for I well know that thy priests will absolve thee from all blame in breaking faith with a Jewess; but pledge me thy word as a knight and noble—a pledge you Christians prize above faith or religion, mercy or justice—and all thy doubts shall be satisfied."

"Then I promise you upon my knightly honour, to risk rank and life in thy service; but if thou deceivest me, and for thine own hellish purposes triflest with the feelings of a father, dread the vengeance of de Lacy."

"Knowest thou this writing," demanded Estella,

drawing from the folds of her robe the letter and jewels which she had carried about her person from the day of her father's imprisonment.

Eagerly the Earl snatched the parchment from the hands of Estella, and severing with his dagger the silken band that bound it, hastily perused its contents: It was the farewell of one whom Reginald de Lacy had fondly loved—his ill-fated wife; and tears, scalding tears, ran down the sun-burnt cheeks of the stern warrior, as after so long a separation he read the last words she had written, full of tenderness, to him, and earnestly recommending her orphan boy to his care. When de Lacy's emotion had subsided, he examined the jewels, which were those of his lamented lady, and then demanded of Estella the manner in which she had become possessed of these relics of his departed Beatrice. Estella simply recounted to the Earl the history confided to her by the Rabbi before his imprisonment.

"Woman!" said the Earl, his countenance becoming livid with fear, "my boy hath been under thy roof and amongst thy people, hast thou dared to trifle with his faith? hast thou taken advantage of his helplessness to destroy the soul of my boy?"

"Christian," answered Estella calmly, "my people make not converts by fraud or force; thy son hath learnt naught among my people that de Lacy's heir may blush for; we poison not the benefits we confer by tempting to the commission of crime. No, no, thy son hath shared our scanty pittance, and been the

child of our love, but his foot hath never entered a Jewish house of prayer."

De Lacy felt the blush of honest shame tinge his cheek as he compared the noble conduct of the Rabbi with that of the proud peers of England and her hard-hearted King; and even he, blinded as he was by education and prejudice, could not but feel how differently he should have acted to the child of a Jew.

The eager anxiety to behold his lost boy, however, quickly banished every other thought from the mind of de Lacy. But as it was necessary to use some caution, he consented, though with difficulty, that Estella should bring Albert to his father's arm, leaving Rachel with Lady Maude until her return.

During the progress of the discovery which had restored to her a brother, Maude had remained a silent, but not an uninterested observer; and on Estella's departure she threw herself on her father's neck and murmured forth her congratulations.

"And thou wilt receive this little wanderer, and love him as a sister should love a brother, my own Maude?"

"Father, can I fail to love one who is dear to thee," asked the weeping girl. "No, no, I will love him as a brother, and watch over him as a tender, affectionate mother."

De Lacy pressed her fondly to his heart, while Rachel, who had arisen and stood at some little distance, could not but hope that hearts so full of affection

would care for his safety who had preserved one so dear to them.

With a light step Estella hastened to her own dwelling, but one thought occupying her mind, that her father's deliverance would be insured by the restoration of Albert to his father.

But a pang shot across her heart when she remembered that the parting with the boy, whom they so fondly loved, would in all human probability be eternal.

Albert was seated by the side of Esther, striving to awaken in her mind some knowledge of the events passing around her; for she had sunk into a state of imbecility; and when Estella bade him resign his task to her son, who was seated dejectedly by the window, with a religious book in his hand, Albert arose and followed her mechanically, little dreaming of the important change about to take place in his existence.

They reached the house of de Lacy, but as they advanced in the gate Albert wildly grasped the arm of his conductress, while a terrible fear thrilled his heart.

"Not there, Estella, not there!" he exclaimed, "unless thou wouldst buy thy father's safety by a deed he would scorn. The betrayal of a helpless orphan, who has no friends but thee and thine."

"Boy," answered Estella, "how have I deserved this suspicion of thee? Thou, at least, shouldst not doubt the good faith of thy protectors."

"Forgive me, Estella, and blame me not," answered Albert, "for though years have flown since I last

beheld it, I can never forget the abode of my bitterest enemy, my father's kinsman, Walter de Lacy."

"From him, Albert," answered Estella, "thou canst have nothing more to fear; he is dead, and the present heritor of the estates will gladly embrace the lost heir of de Lacy."

Albert was about eagerly to question the Jewess respecting the present possessor of his father's rights but 'ere he could command his emotion sufficiently to speak, he found himself in the entrance of the mansion, and another instant brought him into the presence of the Earl. At the sound of footsteps, de Lacy, who had passed the time of Estella's absence in a state of terrible agitation, sprang eagerly forward. One wild and searching glance he cast upon the features of his long-lost child. Then with a cry of thankfulness he pressed him to his bosom, exclaiming, "It is my own child, the living likeness of my sainted Beatrice, whom I once more, after so many weary years, press in my arms."

Estella and Rachel stood apart, watching with tearful eyes the meeting of father and son after so long a separation, while Maude eagerly claimed her share in the caresses of her brother.

And Albert—who can describe his feelings as he felt the embrace of a parent whom he had never hoped to meet again, and heard the voice of his father, and felt his tears and kisses on his cheek? It seemed so like a happy dream, that the poor boy feared to

raise his eyes and gaze on the faces of his father and sister, lest he should find the whole sweet illusion dispelled.

"Father! father!" he murmured at length, "is this real? am I indeed in thy arms? once more in our own dear home? or is it but a mocking vision sent to cheat away the memory of sorrow for awhile, only to render its after pangs more hard to endure?"

"It is no dream, child of my Beatrice," answered the Earl; "thou art folded in thy father's arms."

"God of Jews and Christians, I thank thee!" and Albert clasped his hands together as he spoke; "now, at least, I can show gratitude to my preserver, for surely in his sore extremity, de Lacy must protect the generous protector and restorer of his child."

The Earl glanced toward the spot where Estella and Rachel stood, and said, "Fear not, trust de Lacy; but at present I would be alone with my children;" and summoning Maude's most trusty attendant, he confided the Hebrews to her charge, bidding them remain in the castle until after his conference with his recovered son.

During the happy hours that followed, de Lacy gained from Albert an account of all that had chanced to him since their separation.

And when the boy recounted, with all the warmth of an affectionate heart, all which the Rabbi had done for him; how he had enlightened his mind without attempting to destroy his religion; how he had watched over him and shared with him the few com-

forts his poverty allowed. De Lacy felt the mists of prejudice disappear like the shades of night before the sunlight, and it needed not Albert's passionate pleading to determine the Earl to risk everything for one who had acted so nobly to him and his. To attempt, however, to interfere with one on whom the Church had set her mark, was, de Lacy well knew, a dangerous task; still there was no time to be lost, and he determined that very day to see the prior of the convent in which Mordecai was confined.

"Let me go with thee, father!" exclaimed Albert eagerly, "and I will so plead to the prior for the safety of my second parent, that he shall not be enabled to resist my fervent prayers."

"Alas! my son," said the Earl, "thy earnestness will but expose thyself to dangers and suspicion of heresy, as one who hath so long dwelt with unbelievers. The churchmen will look with doubt upon thy words. Trust to me, Albert, and tarry with thy sister. Surely, the protector of his child need not fear a cold advocate in de Lacy," he continued; and then addressing his daughter: "Maude, what wouldst thou say? methinks thou wert about to speak."

"Gilbert de Harcourt, the prior of the convent, is a near relation of my betrothed husband," said Maude, "and in good time, behold, here he is himself: admit him to a part in our counsel."

In a few moments de Harcourt was made acquainted with the happy Providence which had restored a dear relative to his betrothed; and probably his congratula-

tions were the more sincere, because de Lacy's earldom being a male-fief, Maude was deprived of no advantage by the restoration of her brother.

"Leave this affair to me," said Harcourt, after a few moments' deliberation. "The prior is my near kinsman, and doubtless, for my sake, backed with a handsome present to the convent, the liberation of the Jew will be effected on the morrow."

"If it be so, de Harcourt, thou wilt indeed confer a boon on me and my children, which Maude," he added, gazing fondly on his daughter, "shall repay."

Estella and Rachel, after embracing Albert, returned to their own dwelling, with hearts lightened somewhat of their fears for the Rabbi, and, with a gladness to which they had for many days been strangers, they recounted to Jacob the events of the morning.



## CHAPTER V.

THE Rabbi, under the influence of the kinder treatment he had experienced since the visit of the prior to his dungeon, had slowly recovered his strength; but his burden of care was becoming daily more intolerable; for his heart yearned for tidings of his beloved family and people. But he vainly sought to gain any intelligence from the monks who visited his cell. At length the prior himself entered his apartment, and briefly recounted to him the edict which condemned his unhappy brethren to expatriation.

“My wife and children!” he exclaimed wildly; “what will become of them, if this unjust decree is carried into effect, and my people!—oh! my unhappy brethren!—despoiled, cast out, like poisonous reptiles. Ye have no hope, no comfort, save in your God. And is He not all-powerful?” he continued, solemnly. “Sinful being that I am, to distrust His goodness. He who fed your fathers with manna in the wilderness, will not forsake ye in your sorrow.”

The Rabbi leaned his head upon his hand and was silent, while the prior seized this moment of sorrow to impress on the mind of the Rabbi the arguments he had before used to urge him to abandon his faith.

“Forbear, man,” said the Rabbi, sternly, “to

oppress one who hath already a burden as heavy as he can bear. Thy arguments are vain: I die as I lived—a Jew.”

“Rash, man,” said the prior, “why wilt thou provoke thy fate? Seize the chance of safety offered thee, while there is yet time. To-morrow it may be too late.”

“Be it so,” answered the Rabbi, “I am weary of life, and care not how soon I am called to resign it.”

Farther attempts to gain an answer from Mordecai were vain, and wearied out with his firmness, Gilbert, at length left him to his solitude. When the prior returned to his own apartment he found his kinsmen awaiting him.

The first greeting over, de Harcourt went at once into the purport of his mission, which was to offer to his kinsman an abbacy which he had long coveted in return for the release of Mordecai.

“I would that I could accept thy terms, Arthur,” said the prior, “for I will not conceal from thee that this Jew is so obstinate in his unbelief that every means have been tried in vain to make him a convert; but bethink thee of the scandal which must accrue to our brethren, if it be known that, after our boast that we could convert these accursed Jews, if they were compelled to listen to us, we have had a Jew so long in our power and at last released him voluntarily, unconverted.”

“Let me see the Jew, holy father. Doubtless, means of release may be devised without scandal to

the brotherhood. Cannot he escape without your knowledge? Surely these people, who are supposed to hold communion with beings who can aid them when in necessity, can find means of extricating themselves ; and none but ourselves, good kinsman, if we keep our own counsel, can know that the Abbot of Saint James's owes his mitre to his share in this miraculous escape."

"Thou hast more wisdom than I gave thee credit for, Arthur," said the prior, smiling. "Go to the Jew. I leave the management of the affair in thy hands ; but save the honour of the convent."

The Prior himself conducted the young Earl to the prison of Mordecai, and left them together.

Mordecai gazed with surprise upon his visitor, the richness of whose garb, and the stateliness of whose bearing, at once announced his high rank.

"Jew," said Harcourt, abruptly, addressing the Rabbi, "I come to thee on behalf of one who has pledged his honour to insure thy safety. To-night thou wilt find the dress of a monk in thy cell ; put it on, and ask no questions, but follow the guide who will be here whithersoever he may choose to lead thee, and be assured that powerful friends protect thee. Farewell ; and 'ere the astonished Hebrew could find words to reply, he was alone.

Mordecai's first impulse was to return thanks to the Heavenly Father who had raised him up a deliverer so unexpectedly. This duty performed, he could not forbear endeavouring to discover who could thus be

interested in his fate ; but all conjectures on this point were vain.

With a beating heart Mordecai watched the shades of night descend upon the convent ; and as hour after hour passed by, he began to fear that he had been deceived, and strove to prepare his mind for disappointment. While thus engaged, the door of his cell was softly opened, and a friar entered, with his face closely muffled in his cowl.

He drew from the folds of his loose robe the dress of a monk, and bade the Jew don it quickly.

Mordecai did as he was desired ; but his heart misgave him when the monk bound a kerchief tightly round his eyes, and taking his hand, bade him accompany him silently.

Breathing an inward prayer to his Heavenly Protector, the Rabbi proceeded until he heard his conductor unloose a door, and felt the fresh air blowing upon his face.

A feeling of exquisite delight pervaded Mordecai's heart, when the bandage was withdrawn from his eyes, and he found himself without the walls of the convent, with the blue skies above him, and the blessed consciousness of recovered freedom in his heart.

While indulging this feeling, the Rabbi felt someone touch his arm, and, turning quickly, beheld a man beside him.

"Follow me silently," he said, "to the river side, where a boat waits to carry you to a place

of safety. "Thou art feeble, lean on me," said the man, as the Rabbi followed him with faltering footsteps. "Courage, we are near the water side."

Without further incident the Rabbi reached the boat, and, in a few moments, he was gliding over the bosom of the river, towards his place of refuge.

Just as the first beams of the morning broke over the river, the conductor of the Rabbi moored the boat to a bank, close to a feudal castle, and Hubert, so was the man named, gave his hand to Mordecai, and assisted him to land.

"Yonder is the place of our destination," said he, pointing to the castle, "another instant, and thou wilt be safe from pursuit."

"To whom, then, am I indebted for my safety," demanded the Rabbi.

"One moment more, and thou wilt know," answered Hubert. Even while he spake the Rabbi heard a bounding step behind him, and Albert flung himself into his arms, exclaiming, "Father! my more than father!"

"Thou here!" exclaimed the wondering Mordecai; "and my wife and children, where are they?"

"Here, all here," answered Albert eagerly, "under the roof of my father, Reginald de Lacy."

The meeting of the Rabbi and his family, and the explanation that followed, although of a joyful character, was mingled with much sorrow. The home where they had hoped to pass the remnant of their days was destroyed. To the land of their nativity

they could not return, and they knew not whither to direct their footsteps.

When de Lacy had allowed what he considered sufficient time for the interchange of feeling, he sent for the Rabbi. "Jew," he said, when Mordecai entered, "I am thy debtor to a heavy amount; thou hast restored to me the child whom I have long mourned as lost; restored him to me pure and noble, and worthy to be the descendant of heroes; moreover, thou hast taught me a lesson, alas! too rarely practised, that of religious toleration, and shown me that the highest social virtues may be practised without the pale of the Christian Church. Noble-hearted man, how shall I requite thy generosity?"

"Thou hast already requited me, Earl de Lacy," answered the Jew; "hast thou not rescued me from worse than death? hast thou not done what none of thy creed have ever done, spoken to me as man should speak unto man? And is it not a rich reward to rescue a heart like thine from the trammels of prejudice? When I and my people are far away from thee, it will be a consolation to know that one Christian, at least, will think with sympathy of the wrongs of the Jew."

De Lacy pressed the Rabbi's hand. "Noble, true-hearted man," he said, "why art not thou a Christian?"

"Rather," replied the Rabbi, "why cannot the Jew and Christian live in amity together, each pursuing the path he deems the right one? To that end we all hope to attain!"

De Lacy shook his head. "I fear, Rabbi," he said, "thy bones and mine will long be whitening in the tomb, and our very memories be forgotten, 'ere such a state of things shall come to pass. But thou art going into exile," he continued, "and the iniquitous decree of the King deprives thee of the means of gaining a livelihood in a foreign country. Let de Lacy be thy purse-holder. Nay," seeing the Rabbi was about to speak, "if thou forgettest thine own wants, remember thou hast a helpless and dependent family."

"I cannot gainsay thee," answered the Rabbi, mournfully, "for, alas! I have no longer any means of providing for the wants of those who depend upon me."

"To-day thou remainest with me," said the Earl, "and within these walls thou art safe from all pursuit; by to-morrow a vessel will be prepared to bear thee whithersoever thou hast fixed for thy abiding-place; and rest assured, if it be in de Lacy's power to protect thy people from insult or wrong, he will not forget how much he owes to one of them."

When the Rabbi returned to his family, after the interview with the Earl, he found Estella in tears, while a mingled expression of joy and sorrow showed itself on the face of his grandson.]

"We shall go back, dear father, we shall go back to our own dear country," sobbed Estella, as she threw herself on her father's neck; "the unhappy man who hath caused us so many years of sorrow is dead. Moreover, he died in the faith of his fathers, after months of penitence and remorse."

"How knowest thou this, my child?" said the Rabbi, eagerly.

"I received a letter yesterday, but had no heart to open it until noon; for, while thy safety was uncertain, how could I think of aught beside? But now we can return to a land where we can worship our God in peace and safety, and I can no longer reproach myself as the cause of suffering to my aged parents."

"We have not trusted in vain, my child," said the Rabbi; "the God whom we served has rewarded us. Oh! would that the same happy fortune awaited all our brethren."

De Lacy kept his promise to the Rabbi; on the morrow he found a vessel prepared to take him and his family, with a number of their co-religionists, from the inhospitable shores of England. After a prosperous voyage, they gained the land of Spain, and the Rabbi was quickly reinstated in his former opulence.

The remainder of the English Jews were not so fortunate. What little property the King left them to defray the expenses of their forced journey they were robbed of by the people of the various towns they had to pass through on their way to the sea-shore.

One wretch, the captain of a vessel, engaged to take a number on board of his ship, but first obtained possession of their goods, and then he sailed away, and left the unhappy victims to their fate.

De Lacy, agreeably to the promise he had made to the Rabbi, rescued them from their misery, and provided them with the means of quitting the kingdom;

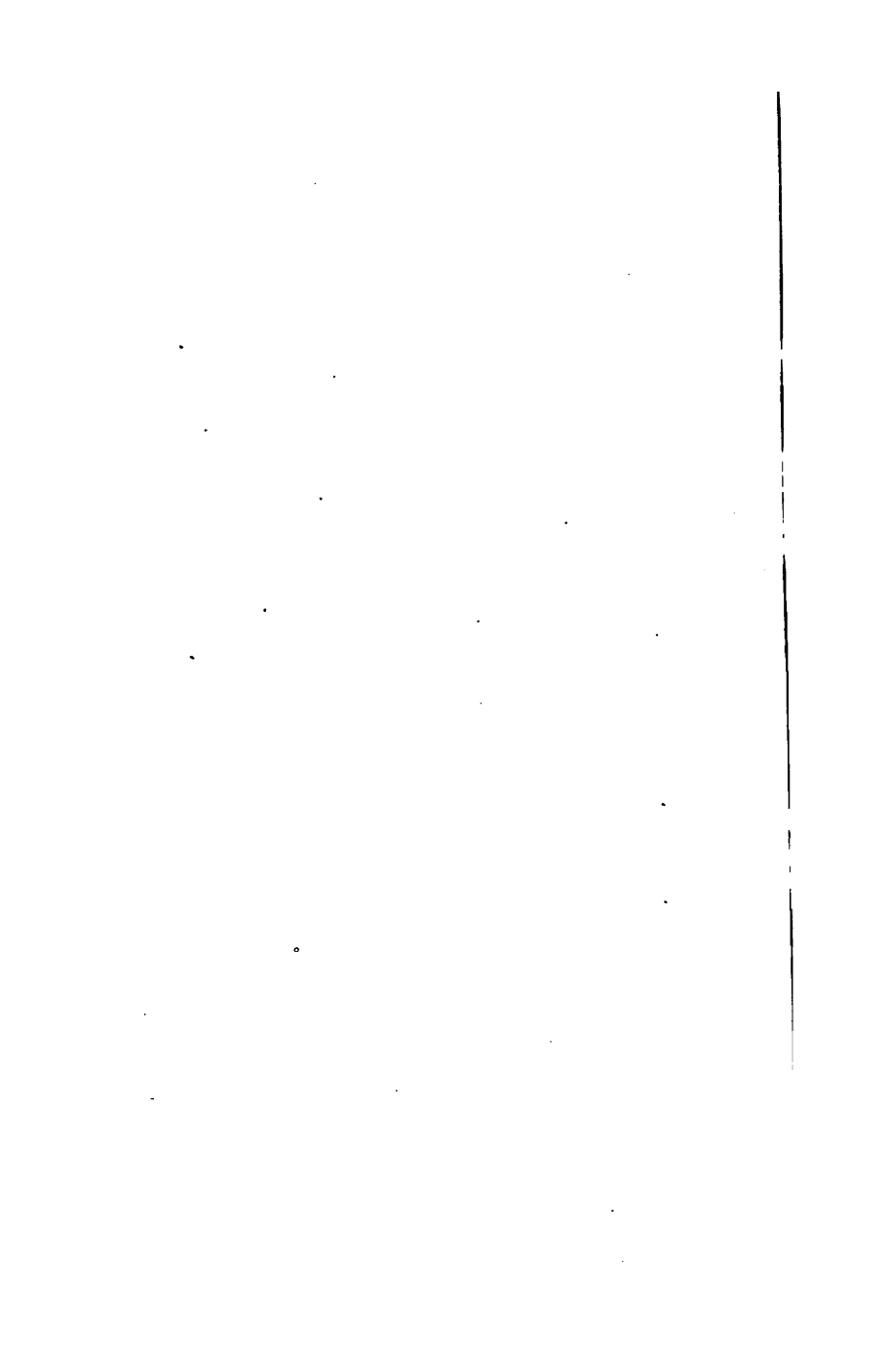


nor was he satisfied until he saw justice performed on the base villain who had taken advantage of their helpless situation.

But it would be useless to harrow up the feelings of the reader by details of suffering already too well known. These scenes were reacted throughout every Christian land, until, at length, the progress of civilization opened the eyes of the potentates of Europe to their true interest, while the introduction of the art of printing, and the consequent dissemination of education, combined with other causes, brought into action the principles of religious toleration, and paved the way for an improvement of the social condition of the Jews and the acknowledgment of those rights which had been so long and so unjustly withheld from them.

THE END.









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